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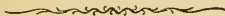
THE GOSPELS AND ACTS,

FOR

PULPIT, SUNDAY-SCHOOL, AND FAMILY.

MATTHEW, MARK, JOHN.

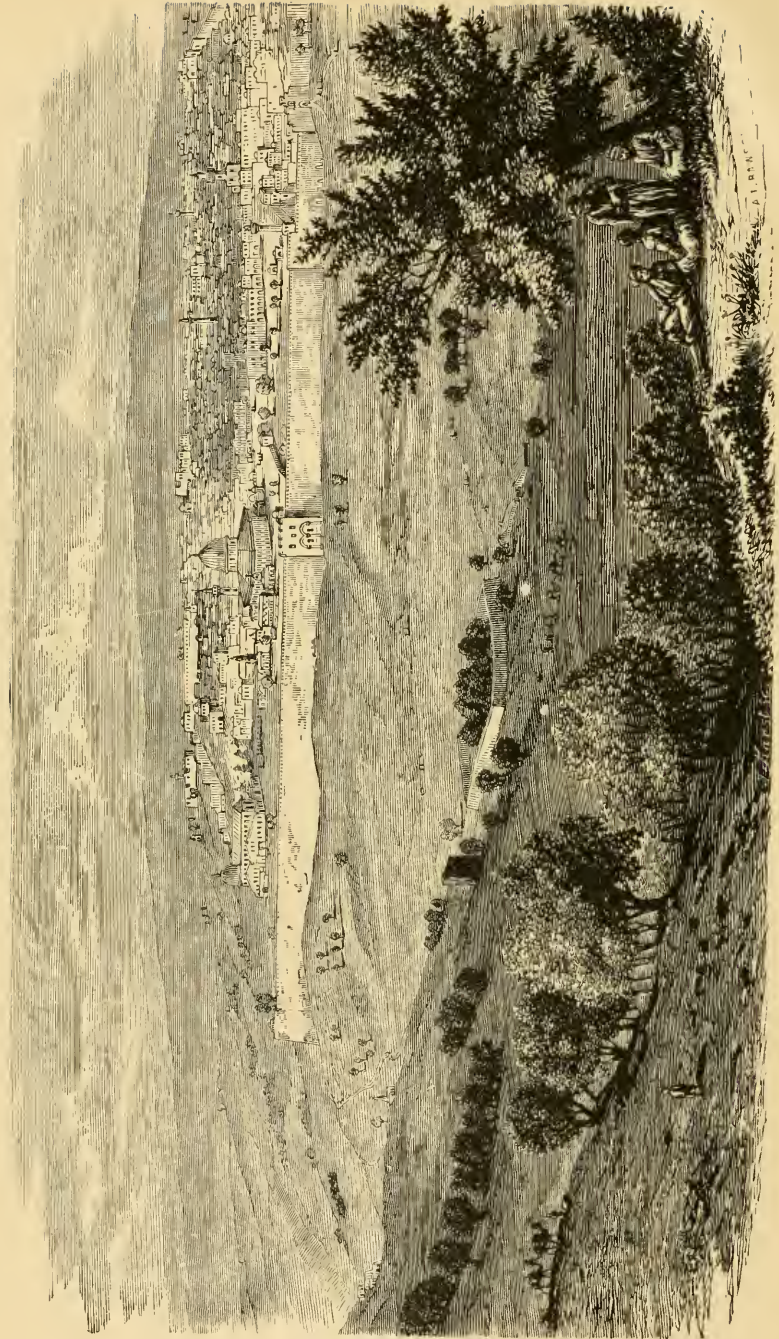
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## PREFACE.

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In the preparation of the "EXPOSITOR," the Author, with a view to its usefulness, very freely availed himself of all the reliable aid within his reach, without deeming it necessary in all cases to indicate the numerous sources from which it was derived. Instead of encumbering the volume with a mass of authorities, or the history and comparison of conflicting opinions, which, for the ordinary reader, tend rather to obscure than to elucidate, it was his aim merely to present the last and best results of Biblical research, scientific discovery, and historical development, bearing upon the portions of Scripture expounded. And this he labored to do, with such an union of exegesis and practical reflection, as well as in such method, spirit and style, as would combine attraction, instruction, and profitable impression. Difficulties, without being formally stated in some instances, and without hope of their unshadowed solution in many more, were, under a sense of duty, grappled by him according to his ability. Constant care was also taken in the treatment of all passages to avoid the extremes of too great brevity and too great fullness.

In the full notation of parallel passages, the attachment of a list of questions to each chapter, and the insertion of the "HISTORICAL INDEX," which furnishes a more extended explanation of persons, places and things than would have been proper where they severally and repeatedly occur in the text, reference was had not only to the convenience of the student, but also to his economy of time and means. The *Appendixes*, in which are presented a "Biographical Sketch of the Apostles," and an essay on "Demoniacal Possessions," will, it is hoped, be regarded with interest as well by the general as the professional reader.

The work has involved a large expenditure of time and strength, but this was patiently borne under a deep conviction that they were being devoted to the noblest and best of all services. In all expositions supreme reference was had to "the mind of the Spirit," and it is gratefully acknowledged that one great compensation for the toil endured has been already received in the testimonies of so many eminent Ministers and Laymen, who occupy different, and in some respects divergent, sections in the vineyard of our blessed Lord—that the portion of the Divine Word which we have dealt with, has been, without evasion, compromise or dilution, fully and faithfully unfolded—thus showing that in *their* judgment, as well as in our own, there is a broad and deep substratum of truth in the Bible, which may be reached, and on which God's dear people may and do rest as the rule of their faith, hope and practice, even though, for reasons which it is not necessary for us here either to state or discuss, such common basis be not yet as visibly and practically recognized, as very many think it should be, and fervently pray it soon may be.

The Divine blessing is earnestly implored upon the work, whenever, wherever and by whomsoever it may be read. Should it prove acceptable to the public, an exposition of the remainder of the New Testament will follow in due time, if Providence permit.

PHILADELPHIA, September 1, 1872.

PREFACE

TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

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HISTORY OF THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

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The details of Matthew's life which have been preserved are very scanty. Little is known of him except what he has recorded of himself. (ix. 9-13, x. 3.)

He was a Galilean, but of what city or tribe of Israel is unknown. Though a Jew, he was employed as a publican, or tax-gatherer, under the Romans, to whom the Jews were now tributary, in the provincial government of Judea. The circumstance that, although deeply attached to the religion of his fathers, he adopted an occupation against which such strong prejudices were entertained, would seem to indicate that, to some extent, at least, he could distinguish between the true essence of Judaism and its outward forms and traditional prejudices. His ordinary residence was Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee, where he took the customs' duty for the transportation of goods backward and forward, and the toll from passengers, who crossed the water. The name Matthew is probably a contracted form of Mattathiah, *gift of Jehovah*, or, as some think, identical with Amittai, *true, faithful*. That Matthew is the same with "Levi, son of Alphaeus," whom, according to Luke (v. 27, 29), and Mark (ii. 14), the Lord called from the receipt of custom, is evident, not only from the perfect agreement in the circumstances related by these Evangelists with the account given by Matthew of himself (ix. 9), but also from the fact that in the list of the twelve Apostles (Matt. x. 3), Matthew is called *the publican*. If there were two publicans, both called solemnly in the same form at the same place, Capernaum, then one of them became an Apostle, and the other was heard of no more, for Levi is not mentioned again after the feast which he made in our Lord's honor. (Luke v. 29.) This is most unlikely. The change of name cannot be regarded as an objection to the identity of Matthew and Levi. It was common among the Jews to have two names; as "Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus" (Matt. x. 3), and "Simon, who is called Peter." (Matt. x. 2.) When a Jew became a Roman citizen he usually assumed a Roman name. Hence it is supposed that "Levi" was the original Hebrew, and "Matthew" the assumed Roman name of this Evangelist. Or, the former may have been his family name, and the latter the one by which he was known as a disciple. If, as is generally supposed, the father of Matthew was the same with the Alphaeus named as the father of James the Less, then he was the cousin of the Lord Jesus.

Matthew was first called by our Lord while he abode in Capernaum. (Matt. ix. 9.)

He was sitting in his office, by the sea-side, when Jesus, at an early period of His ministry, spoke to him, his hands full of business, his head, perhaps, of calculations, and his heart of covetousness: for it is not certain that he had paid any previous regard to the teaching of Christ. But, when commanded to follow Jesus, such a power attended the word as led him to renounce his employment, and immediately to become an attendant on the Saviour, that he might be a preacher of the Gospel.

"At once he rose, and left his gold,  
His treasure and his heart transferred."

It is not probable, however, that he followed Jesus continuously, until he had settled his accounts with those by whom he had been employed. When, before the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord inaugurated His body of Apostles, Matthew was included, and in his own catalogue stands second in class, and eighth in order. There is one circumstance which reflects much credit on Matthew. After the calling of him by Jesus, the Saviour, at his request, partook, with some publicans who had also been invited, of an entertainment at his house. His design, doubtless, in giving this great feast, was, besides paying respect to Christ, to afford his former friends an opportunity for familiar acquaintance with Him, and to give our Lord a favorable opportunity for free and unrestrained conversation on religion and the Messiah's dispensation. But, whilst he gives a brief account of the feast (ix. 10), we are indebted to Mark (ii. 15) and Luke (v. 29) for the fact, which Matthew's modesty omitted to mention, that Matthew himself gave the feast. He wished to do honor to his Master, and to preserve the important sentiments which He had expressed. To others he left it, if they chose to do so, to make known the important part which he had in this matter. It is also observable as indicating the same spirit, that he does not dissemble his former profession as a publican (x. 3), thus exalting the grace of Christ which raised him to the Apostleship.

Matthew continued a faithful attendant upon our Saviour till His crucifixion, and was an eye-witness of His miracles, and a hearer of His discourses. He remained in Jerusalem until the day of Pentecost, when he received the Holy Ghost with the rest of the Apostles, after which there is no authentic account of him to be met with; he doubtless continued in Judea preaching the Gospel till the time of persecution compelled him to retire. According to Socrates, an historian of the 5th century, Matthew preached the Gospel in Ethiopia (*Hisp. Eccl.* l. c. 19); where, it is an opinion with many, he died a martyr in the city of Nadabbar or Nadavver, but by what death is not known. (*Cave's Liv. Apos.*) Others say he died in Parthia, or Persia: Clement of Alexandria, on the authority of Heracleon, a learned Valentinian of the 2d century, denies that he suffered martyrdom. (*Strom.* lib. iv.): and Chrysostom in his eulogy on Matthew makes no mention of such circumstance. (*Hom.* 48, 49.) This diversity of opinion evidently shows that these suppositions are without good foundation.

#### AUTHORSHIP OF THIS GOSPEL.

There is no ancient book with regard to the authorship of which we have earlier, fuller, and more unanimous testimony. From Papias, almost if not quite contemporary with the Apostles, downward, we have a stream of unimpeachable witnesses to the fact that Matthew was the author of a Gospel, while the quotations which abound in the works of the Fathers prove that—at least as early as Irenæus—if we may not also add Justin, whose "Memorabilia of Christ" we cannot but identify with the "Gospels" he speaks of as in public use—prove that the Gospel received by the church under his name was the same as that which has reached us.

## LANGUAGE IN WHICH IT WAS WRITTEN.

It was a general tradition in the early church that there was a Gospel, written by Matthew, in Syro-Chaldaic. That he did write some notices of our Lord's life in the vernacular language of Palestine is probable. But the originality and genuineness of the Greek Gospel are sustained by the strongest evidence. No trace of any Hebrew Gospel now remains. In Palestine, moreover, Greek was the language of books of business, and of common life. Looking, therefore, to the habits of his countrymen, and to the approaching dissolution of the Jewish State, he had every inducement to employ that tongue.

## TIME AND PLACE AT WHICH THIS GOSPEL WAS WRITTEN.

The time when this Gospel was written is uncertain; but if the testimony of old writers that it is the earliest of the Gospels must be taken into account, this would bring it before A. D. 58-60, the supposed date of Luke. The most probable supposition is that it was written between 50 and 60; the exact year cannot even be guessed at. There is however no doubt that it was written in Palestine.

## GENUINENESS.

Irenæus, Tatian, who died A. D. 170, and who composed a harmony of the Gospels, lost to us; Theophilus, of Antioch, who, about 168, wrote a commentary on the Gospels; Clement, of Alexandria, who flourished about 189; Tertullian, born about 160; Origen, born 185; Justin Martyr, and other early writers, prove that the Gospel of Matthew was received very anciently in the Christian Church. It has, indeed, been asserted by some, who admit generally its authority, that the first two chapters are a spurious addition. But for this there is not the shadow of a foundation. "When," says Elliott, "we remember (1) that these chapters are contained in every manuscript, uncial or cursive, and in every version, Eastern or Western, that most of the early fathers cite them, and that early enemies to Christianity appealed to them (Orig. *Cels.* i. 38, ii. 32), when we observe (2) the obvious connection between the beginning of chapter iii., and the end of chapter ii., and between iv. 13 and ii. 23, and when we remark (3) the exact accordance of diction with that of the remaining chapters of the Gospel, it becomes almost astonishing that even *a priori* prejudice should not have abstained at any rate from so hopeless a course as that of impugning the genuineness of these chapters."

## PURPOSE OF THIS GOSPEL.

There is plain internal evidence that this Gospel was written particularly for the use of the Jews, to show them in Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah of the Old Testament whom they expected, and not merely Jews in Palestine, but Jews all over the world. It bears a striking Jewish character and coloring. The facts which it selects, the points to which it gives prominence, the cast of thought and phraseology, the number of passages in it which refer to the Old Testament (about 65), the number of verbal citations of the Old Testament—all bespeak the Jewish point of view *from* which it was written and *to* which it was directed. This has been noticed from the beginning, is universally acknowledged, and is of the greatest consequence to the right interpretation of Matthew. His Gospel is pervaded by one principle, the fulfillment of the law and of the Messianic prophecies in the person of Jesus. This at once sets it in opposition to the Judaism of the time, for it rebuked the Pharisaic interpretations of the law (v. xxiii.), and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world through his blood, ideas which

were strange to the cramped and limited Judaism of the Christian era. From his peculiar genius, his training, and his apostolical calling, Matthew, the publican and Apostle, was peculiarly fitted for the task of writing this Gospel. By it he connects the New Testament most intimately with the Old. And this is done not by an index of the writings of the Old Testament, but by the Old Testament genealogy of Jesus, thus furnishing evidence of the indissoluble connection between the Old and the New Testament, which continued in the secret recesses of Jewish life from the close of the one to the commencement of the other.

STYLE.

The style of our Evangelist is simple and perspicuous. He is grave, without formal stiffness; plain, with dignity. Though he has not the graphic power of Mark, or the spiritual perceptions of John, yet, in the clearness, simplicity and fullness of details, he is perhaps superior to either, and equal to Luke.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GOSPEL.

One characteristic of this Gospel is its constant citations from the Old Testament. The following list is nearly complete :

MATT.	MATT.
I. 23. Is. vii. 14.	XV. 8. Is. xxix. 13.
II. 6. Mic. v. 2.	XVII. 2. Ex. xxxiv. 29.
15. Hos. xi. 1.	11. Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5.
18. Jer. xxxi. 15.	XVIII. 15. Lev. xix. 17.
III. 3. Is. xl. 3.	XIX. 4. Gen. i. 27.
IV. 4. Deu. viii. 3.	5. Gen. ii. 24.
6. Ps. xci. ii.	7. Deu. xxiv. 1.
7. Deu. vi. 16.	18. Ex. xx. 12. Lev. xix. 18.
10. Deu. vi. 13.	XXI. 5. Zech. ix. 9.
15. Is. viii. 23, ix. 1.	9. Ps. cxviii. 25.
V. 5. Ps. xxxvii. 11.	13. Is. lvi. 7. Jer. vii. 11.
21. Ex. xx. 13.	16. Ps. viii. 2.
27. Ex. xx. 14.	42. Ps. cxviii. 22.
31. Deu. xxiv. 1.	44. Is. viii. 14.
33. Lev. xix. 12. Deu. xxiii. 23.	XXII. 24. Deu. xxv. 5.
38. Ex. xxi. 24.	32. Ex. iii. 6.
43. Lev. xix. 18.	37. Deu. vi. 5.
VIII. 4. Lev. xiv. 2.	39. Lev. xix. 18.
17. Is. liii. 4.	44. Ps. cx. 1.
IX. 13. Hos. vi. 6.	XXIII. 35. Gen. iv. 8. 2 Chr. xxiv. 21.
X. 35. Mic. vii. 6.	38. Ps. lix. 25.
XI. 5. Is. xxxv. 5; xxix. 18.	Jer. xii. 7; xxii. 5.
10. Mal. iii. 1.	39. Ps. cxviii. 26.
14. Mal. iv. 5.	XXIV. 15. Dan. ix. 27.
XII. 3. 1 Sam. xxi. 6.	29. Is. xliii. 10.
5. Num. xxviii. 9.	37. Gen. vi. 11.
7. Hos. vi. 6.	XXVI. 31. Zech. xliii. 7.
18. Is. xlii. 1.	52. Gen. ix. 6.
40. Jon. i. 17.	64. Dan. vii. 13.
42. 1 K. x. 1.	XXVII. 9. Zech. xi. 13.
XIII. 14. Is. vi. 9.	35. Ps. xxii. 18.
35. Ps. lxxviii. 2.	43. Ps. xxii. 8.
XV. 4. Ex. xx. 12; xxi. 17.	46. Ps. xxii. 1.



Matthew's Gospel also contains many circumstances not recorded by the other Evangelists, the chief of which are :

Visit of the Magi, . . . . .	Matt.	ii. 1-12.
Flight into Egypt, . . . . .		ii. 13-16.
Murder of the Innocents, . . . . .		ii. 16-19.
Parable of the Ten Virgins, . . . . .		xxv. 1-13.
Dream of Pilate's Wife, . . . . .		xxvii. 19.
Resurrection of many Saints after our Lord's crucifixion, . . . . .		xxvii. 52-55.
Bribing of the Roman Guard set to watch the sepulchre, . . . . .		xxviii. 11-16.

Matthew presents the life of Jesus as forming a part of the history and life of the Jewish nation, and hence, as the fulfillment of the hereditary blessing of Abraham. He views things in the grand general aspect, and, indifferent to the details in which Mark loves so much to dwell, he gathers up all in the great result. His narrative proceeds with a majestic simplicity, occasionally regardless of time and according to another and deeper order, ready to sacrifice mere chronology to the development of his idea. Thus he brings together events separated sometimes by considerable intervals, according to the unity of their nature or purpose, and with a grand but simple power accumulates in groups the discourses, parables and miracles of our Lord.

"From its prevailing historical character," says *Lange*, "the Gospel of Matthew may be regarded as forming the basis of all others. It dwells chiefly on the great facts of the life of Jesus as foretold and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, while Mark sketches His individual personality. Luke presents Him in His mercy to humanity at large; and John, in his symbolical, divinely ideal Gospel, opens to our view the fullness of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. In its typological view and exposition of the Old Testament, the Gospel according to Matthew strongly resembles the Epistle to the Hebrews."

Another minor characteristic which deserves remark, is Matthew's use of the plural, where the other Evangelists have the singular. Thus, in the temptation, we have "stones" and "loaves" (iv. 3), two demoniacs (viii. 28), two blind men (xx. 30), the ass and her colt (xxi. 2), servants (xxi. 34, 36), both thieves blaspheming (xxvii. 44). This is ingeniously accounted for by *Da Costa* (*Four Witnesses* p. 322), though this is not universally applicable, on the idea that "his point of view—regarding the events he narrates as fulfilled prophecies—leads him to regard the species rather than the individual, the entire plenitude of the prophecy rather than the isolated fulfillment."

Matthew and John alone have the honor of being at the same time Apostles and Evangelists. As Evangelist, our *publican* stands first in order, and opens the message of salvation, even as Mary Magdalene, who had been a *sinner*, was the first to bring tidings of the resurrection.

## AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE LAND OF PROMISE.

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THE LAND OF ISRAEL—PALESTINE, OR JUDEA.—Was given in an everlasting covenant to Abraham and his seed forever.—See Gen. xii. 6, 7; xiii. 14-7. It was washed on the W. by the Mediterranean, or *Great sea*, as it is called in the Bible: Num. xxxiv. 6, "And as for the western border, ye shall even have the *great sea* for a border; this shall be your west border." Josh. i. 4, "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the *great sea* toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." NORTHWARD, it reached along the Mediterranean sea to *Mount Casius* at the mouth of the *Orontes*, which is the entrance into *Hamath*. Num. xxxiv. 7-9, "This shall be your *north* border: from the great sea ye shall point out for you MOUNT HOR (Heb. *Hor-ha-hor*).\* From Mount Hor ye shall point out unto the entrance into *Hamath*," &c. Its SOUTH border—is the "River of Egypt,"—see Gen. xv. 18, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the *river of Egypt* unto the great river, the *river Euphrates*." And the EAST border—see Deut. xi. 24, "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: . . . from the river, the *river Euphrates*, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be."

"The difference of latitude and longitude in the land actually occupied by ancient Israel, and that which was promised in the everlasting covenant, and still remains to be fulfilled, is as follows:—See 1 Kings iv. 25, 'Judah and Israel dwelt safely from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.' (But Solomon, like his father David, exercised a nominal or real sovereignty over all the regions which the Lord had given to the seed of Jacob.—See 1 Kings iv. 21.)

"The latitude of Beersheba is 31 deg. 15 min.; of Dan, 33 deg. 15 min.; the south point of the Dead sea, the ancient border of Israel, is 31 deg. 7 min. in the same longitude with Dan, the intervening distance, in a line from north to south, being 128 geographical, or about 150 English miles.

"The latitude of the north point of the Elanitic gulf, on the *Red Sea*, on which *Ezion-geber*, a port of Solomon's, stood, is 29 deg. 31 min. This is the *south* border promised to Abraham. The mouth of the *Orontes*, or the entrance into *Hamath* from the Mediterranean, is 36 deg., and that of Beer, or Berothah, on the Euphrates, 37 deg. But the range of Amanus lies beyond it, and the medium longitude of the *north* boundary is more than 36 deg. 31 min. N.; or in an ideal line, from south to north, the length of the land is upward of seven degrees, or 500 miles, instead of 150 as of old.

"The *breadth* of IMMANUEL'S land, instead of its anciently contracted span, from the Mediterranean sea on the west, to a few miles on the east of Jordan, stops not short of a navigable frontier everywhere and on every side. The longitude of the river Nile is 30 deg. 2 min.; that of the Euphrates, as it flows through the Persian gulf, 48 deg. 26 min.; or a difference of nearly 18 deg. and a half, or more than 1,100 miles.

"On the northern extremity of the land the range of Amanus mountains from the river Euphrates, to the uttermost sea, or extremity of the Mediterranean, scarcely exceeds 100 miles. In round numbers, the average breadth of the PROMISED LAND is 600 miles, which multiplied by its length, 500 miles, gives an area of 300,000 square miles, or more than that of any kingdom or empire in Europe, Russia alone excepted.

\* A very high mountain.

"Separated as Israel is from other lands, such are its borders that it has unequaled freedom of access to all . . . and is well fitted for becoming 'the glory of all lands,' the heritage of a people blessed of the Lord."\*

THE LAND OF PROMISE was so called from God's having given it by promise to the seed of Abraham, Gen. xii. 7; see also Gen. xiii. 14-7, "And the Lord said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee."—xvii. 8, "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

It was called the LAND OF CANAAN because, upon the dispersion of the three great families of mankind, the country lying at the southeastern extremity of the *Mediterranean*, from Sidon to Gaza, was usurped by Canaan, the eldest son of Ham. And the name of PALESTINE was derived from the Philistines, whose ancestors were the Philistim, or children of the Caphtorim and Casluhim, who were descendants of Mizraim (see Gen. x. 13-4.), and came from Egypt. They passed into Canaan, whence they drove out the ancient inhabitants, and they possessed a considerable tract of country at the time Abraham sojourned in Canaan.—See Gen. xxi. 34, "And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days."—See also xxvi. 14-5. They extended their conquests as far northward as Ekron, and nearly to Joppa, and divided their territory into five lordships, called after their principal cities, viz.: Ekron, Ashdod, Gath, Ascalon and Gaza.—See Josh. xiii. 3, "From Sihor which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, *which* is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdothites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites." These dwelt in the western or maritime part of it, bordering on Egypt; and, though they were subjected by David, and kept in obedience by some of his successors, they became afterward so powerful as to furnish the Greek and Latin writers, as well as the neighboring people, with a general appellation for the whole country.

The Israelites left Egypt B. C. 1560,† and after wandering forty years in the wilderness, two tribes and a half of them were settled east of the Jordan by Moses, who died shortly afterward: the children of Israel crossed over the river, under the conduct of Joshua, and, after six years' successful fighting against the Canaanites, divided their land amongst the nine tribes and a half. The southern part of the country, between the *Dead Sea* and the *Mediterranean*, from the *Torrent of Egypt* to Jabneel, now called *Yebna*, was at first allotted to the tribe of Judah: but as it was subsequently found that this was too much for them, the western part of it was given to the tribes of Simeon and Dan, and that to the north was bestowed upon Benjamin. The last mentioned tribe, on whose southern limits was the city of Jerusalem, touched to the east on a small part of the Jordan, and to the west upon Dan. After the death of Joshua, the Israelites became subject to the surrounding nations; but under Saul and David they regained their independence.

The name of JUDAH, or JUDEA, was first applied to the southern part of Palestine when ten of the tribes revolted from the house of David. Upon the death of Solomon, B. C. 974, the kingdom was divided; Rehoboam, his son, being chosen by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and Jeroboam by the remaining ten tribes: the former was henceforward called the kingdom of Judah, the latter the kingdom of Israel.—(1 Kings xii. 16-7, "So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people

\* See Keith's "Land of Israel."

† See Greswell, vol. iii., p. 443.

answered the king saying, What portion have we in David? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But *as for* the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them." 20 ver., "And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.") *Judah*, and the children of Israel, his companions, were from that time called the "kingdom of Judah." After the defection of the ten tribes from under Rehoboam, the two kingdoms maintained their freedom for many years, amidst the continual wars by which they were harassed; but Hazael, king of Syria, at last subdued Israel, and for a long time kept it in subjection. The king of Assyria next invaded them, and having besieged their city *Samaria* for three years, reduced it to ashes.

Such of the inhabitants as survived the dreadful carnage which ensued were carried away captive into Assyria, B. C. 719; and the kingdom of Israel, which had stood divided from that of Judah for more than 250 years, was now at an end. After this, Judah also was attacked by the Babylonians, and subsequently by the Egyptians, the latter of whom reduced it to subjection; but upon the defeat of the Egyptians by the Babylonians, Nebuchadnezzar seized upon Jerusalem, and, after having tyrannized over the people for some years, at last leveled the city and the temple with the ground, and carried away the inhabitants to *Babylon*, and thus put an end to the kingdom of Judah, about B. C. 588, or 476 years from the time that David began to reign over it.—See 2 Chr. xxxvi. Seventy years after, when Cyrus was king of Persia, a remnant of the Jews returned, and built again their city and temple, around which they settled; and the southern part of PALESTINE was henceforth called JUDEA. To the N. of them, in the former inheritance of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh, sate a mixed race of people, among whom may have been some families casually left behind in the great captivity. More certain are we, that colonies of idolatrous heathen were placed there by the Assyrian monarch, 2 Kings xvii. 24–34; and that these were subsequently joined by some Jews, such as Jolada, mentioned Neh. xiii. 28. They were called *Samaritans*, from their dwelling round the old capital of the kingdom of Israel; and were looked upon by the Jews as so impure that they had no dealings with them. Alexander the Great subdued Palestine, and at his death its possession was disputed by Antigonus and the Egyptians, until Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, united it to his dominions. The Jews, under Judas Maccabeus, revolted, and established their freedom. They overran Samaria, and planted colonies in the northern part of the country, which assumed henceforward the name of Galilee; and raised up a king about B. C. 107. His successors called in the Romans to settle their disputes; and the Roman general, Pompey, irritated by the little respect shewn to him, marched against Jerusalem and reduced it, B. C. 63, and soon after completed the subjugation of the whole country. In the time of Marc Antony, Herod was made king of Judea; and it was during his reign that our Saviour was born. Judea remained subject to the Romans till A. D. 66, when a contest arose between the Jews and Syrians respecting the possession of Cesarea; the case being referred to Nero, he decided in favor of the latter; upon which the Jews took up arms, and after committing some dreadful massacres, succeeded in driving all the Romans and Syrians from Judea. Vespasian was sent against them with a powerful army, and would soon have brought them to subjection, but, on his march to Jerusalem, he received the intelligence of his having been chosen emperor; he accordingly left the command of the army to his son Titus, who, A. D. 70, reduced the city to ashes, and put an end to the Jewish nation, as had been prophesied for ages beforehand.

The name of the HOLY LAND is applied to it by Christians in nearly all the languages of *Europe*; chiefly and eminently from its having been the scene of our Blessed Lord's life, death, and resurrection.

In the time of the events recorded in the history of the New Testament, Palestine was divided into five principal parts. These were Galilee, Samaria, Judea, properly so called, Batanaea, and Perea; the three first of which were on this side of Jordan, and the two last beyond it; over all of which Herod, surnamed "the Great," was king.

**GALILEE.**—Was the northernmost province of Palestine, and was exceedingly fertile and populous, having 204 towns and villages, containing, upon an average, 15,000 souls, making in all above 3,000,000 inhabitants. It touched to the W. on *Phœnicia*, to the N. on *Cælo-Syria*, to the E. on *Batanaea*, and to the S. on *Samaria*. It contained 930 square miles. It was subdivided into Upper and Lower, so named with respect to the river Jordan, the former being also called "*Galilee of the Gentiles*," from its being inhabited not only by Jews, but by Syrians, Greeks, Phœnicians, and Egyptians. This province was, above all, honored with our Saviour's presence. It was here that he was conceived; and here, in an obscure village, he lived with his reputed parents until he began to be about thirty years of age, and was baptized of John. And though he visited the other provinces and Judea at the stated feasts, when the male Israelites were commanded to go up to worship in Jerusalem, yet, in fulfillment of prophecy, he fixed upon Capernaum to dwell in; and after his resurrection the disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where they saw and worshiped him; the same probably on which he had been seen by Peter, James, and John, in glory, along with Moses and Elias. And they were "men of Galilee" whom he commissioned, saying, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." **UPPER GALILEE** belonged formerly to the tribe of Naphtali. It bordered on *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and extended E. of the river Jordan. In its northern part, close to the W. source of the Jordan, stood *Dan*, which was formerly *Laish*, until it was wrested by conquest from the Sidonians, when it received the name of the tribe which took it. It was the northernmost town occupied by the children of Israel, in the same way that *Beersheba* was the southernmost; hence the frequent definition of the land of Israel—"from Dan to Beersheba." **LOWER GALILEE** lay between *lake Gennesaret* and the Mediterranean sea. The northern part belonged to the tribe of Zebulun, and the southern part to the tribe of Issachar.

**SAMARIA.**—Touched to the W. on the Mediterranean, to the N. on Phœnicia and Galilee, to the E. on Perea, and to the S. on Judea; it contained 1,330 square miles. It occupied the whole country between the Jordan and the sea; and therefore such as traveled from Judea into Galilee "must needs go through Samaria."

*Samaria* derived its name from its metropolis Samaria, which was so called after one Shemer, of whom Omri, king of Israel, bought the ground, for the building of the city; and from the circumstance of this city having become the subsequent capital of the kingdom of Israel, the name of *Samaria* is frequently used by the sacred writers of the Old Testament, to denote the whole of that kingdom. Samaria is intersected by a range of mountains connected with Mount Hermon of Galilee; where this range enters the province it is called *Gilboa*. Mount *Gilboa*, celebrated for the death of Saul and Jonathan, and for the defeat of the Israelites by the Philistines, was in the northern part of Samaria, and formed part of that range of hills which traverses the whole province from north to south; towards the city of Samaria, it is known by the names of *Phinehas*, *Ebal*, and *Gerizim*, and upon the borders of Judea as the mountains of *Ephraim*.

Upon the division of the tribes into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, *Jero-boam*, king of the latter, built *Sichem*, or *Shechem*, in Mount *Ephraim*, about the centre of Samaria, and made it the capital of his dominions.

*Samaria*, the subsequent metropolis of the kingdom of Israel till the time of the Assyrian captivity, was only a few miles to the north of *Sichem*; it was nearly destroyed by the Assyrians, but was restored by the colonists, whom they sent into the country; and who, from this city, first assumed the name of *Samaritans*. It was very flourishing under the *Maccabees*, but being once more destroyed, it was again rebuilt

and beautified by Herod, who named it *Sebaste*, in honor of Augustus; it is still called *Sebaste* or *Kalaat Sanour*.

JUDEA, properly so-called.—Was bounded on the N. by Samaria, on the E. by the Dead sea, on the S. by Arabia Peræa, and on the W. by the Mediterranean sea. It contained 3,135 square miles, and constituted the inheritance of four out of the twelve tribes, viz.: of Benjamin, Dan, Judah, and Simeon, the two last being in the southern part of the province. The frontier between *Judea* and *Arabia Propria* is formed by a range of mountains, connected with Mount Seir, and known by the names of *Halak* and *Maaleh Acrabbin*; this latter gives the adjacent district the name of *Acrabattene*. These mountains separated the possessions of the children of Israel from the land of Edom, or Idumea, as the Greeks called it; but when the Jews were carried captive to Babylon, the southern part of their country, being left destitute, was seized by the Idumæans, who became so strong as to be able to maintain possession of it long after the Jews returned from their bondage. They were conquered at last by the Maccabees, but, having embraced Judaism, they were incorporated with the Jewish nation, and allowed to retain possession of the country they had seized upon, which from them was called Idumea; it extended as far northward as Hebron, and was noted, as was the whole of Judea, for its fine palm trees. To the northward of this lay the district Daromas, which still preserves its name in *Darom*; between it and Samaria stretches a range of hills, which caused the district they traversed to be called Orine, or “the hill country of Judea.”

*Judea* is celebrated above all other divisions of Palestine. The chief city of the whole land—even Jerusalem, the “city of the Great King,” was there. In *Jerusalem* was the temple of the LORD, to which the Jews were commanded to go up three times every year to worship JEHOVAH, the LORD their God. In *Judea* was *Bethlehem*, the city of David, out of which, although it was little among the thousands of Judah, came forth “HE that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” He who was David’s son, and is David’s Lord, was born there. Jerusalem was the scene of his sufferings; for there he offered himself “a Lamb without spot,” without the gate; there he burst the bonds of death; and from OLIVET, on the east, he ascended into heaven. In *Judea* were the disciples to remain until they were endued with power from on high, and from thence was the gospel to go forth unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

BATANÆA.—Was bounded on the W. by Galilee, on the N. and E. by Syria, and on the S. by Peræa, and corresponded nearly with the inheritance of the half tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan; it contained 1,000 square miles. It derived its name from *Basan*, or *Bashan*, of the Bible, and was noted for its fine cattle and good pasturage; its lofty hills were likewise much celebrated for their beautiful oaks. In the northern part of the province was Mount Hermon—*Heish*, called by the Sidonians, *Sirion*, or *Sion*, and by the Amorites *Shenir*. In its western part was Cesarea Philippi.—In the south-western corner was Gadara—*Om Keis*.

PERÆA.—Was bounded on the N. by *Batanea*, on the W. by *Samaria*, on the S. by *Arabia*, and on the E. by *Syria*; it contained 1,505 square miles. It derived its name from the Greek word *περα*, *ultra*, from its lying beyond Jordan. The southern part of Peræa, between the two rivers *Arnon* and *Jabok*, formed the kingdom of the Amorites, whose king, Sihon, was defeated by the Israelites. In the centre of Peræa rose the lofty *Mount Gilcad*, or *Galeed*, still called *Djelaoud*, near which Jacob and Laban raised a heap of stones in token of friendship; “therefore was the name of it called *Galeed*,” *i. e.*, “*The heap of witness*.”—Gen. xxxi. 48.

Of the LAND OF PROMISE Moses said, Deut. xi. 10—2, “The land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the LORD thy God careth for; the eyes of the LORD thy

God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”

The *Jordan* is the principal river.

Few of the HILLS approach the character of mountains.

QUARANTINA, north of Jericho, rises an almost perpendicular rock, 1,200 or 1,500 feet.

HERMON.—In the N. E. of Galilee is the majestic HERMON, or SION, of the Old Testament. The usual estimate of the height of Hermon (*Jebel Esh-Sheikh*) is 10,000 feet above the Mediterranean. The top is partially crowned with snow, or rather ice, during the whole year, which, however, lies only in the ravines, and thus presents at a distance the appearance of radiant stripes around and below the summit. North-westward of Hermon is *Lebanon*, so full of interesting associations.

TABOR.—Although undeserving of the name of mountain, for height, yet is prominent in Scripture for many important transactions. In its neighborhood Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude, were delivered into the hand of Barak—Judges iv. 6-15; and by many it has been regarded as the place of our Lord's transfiguration. The beauty of the mountain, and its conspicuous position, rendered it a favorite subject of poetic contemplation; and when the Psalmist (lxxxix. 12) exclaims, “Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name,” he selects these two as the representatives of all the mountains of Palestine; the former as the most graceful, and the latter as the loftiest.

MOUNT CARMEL.—Is often mentioned by the sacred writers; it forms one of the most remarkable headlands on the whole coast of the Mediterranean sea, and is about 1,500 feet high.

The prophecies concerning the LAND OF ISRAEL have been so exactly accomplished that they may be used as history. The traveler, however careless of divine revelation, and even the scorner, abundantly testifies to the present desolation of the land: the once strong forts and towers are become dens—defensed cities are destroyed, uninhabited and laid waste. The once productive and well-watered plains are become barren, and the herbs of every field wither. The infidel *Volley* bears witness to the truth of prophecy; for as it had been foretold, he writes, “The temples are thrown down, the palaces are demolished, the ports are filled up, the towns destroyed, and the earth, stripped of its inhabitants, seems a dreary burying-place.” Almost daily, accounts reach us vividly portraying the curse that is upon it. Jerusalem, the City of our God, has become heaps; and Zion, as was predicted, is plowed as a field; and the place of the temple of the Most High is desecrated by the erection of a Mohammedan mosque, where death awaits the true worshiper that dares intrude within the polluted place. The ancient population was, for the limits of the country, greater than that of any other part of the then known world. In the time of David the population must have amounted to several millions, as the men able to bear arms were numbered, at the lowest computation, and after an imperfect census, at 1,300,000. In the time of Jehoshaphat, the men of war in Judah alone amounted to 1,060,000. Josephus tells us that at one celebration of the Passover, in the reign of Nero, there were present at Jerusalem 2,700,000 persons. The valleys are composed of a deep, rich soil, free from stones. The rocks are principally of gray limestone, and they contributed greatly toward the sustenance of a large population, as they were terraced in all directions with embankments built up with loose stones, on which grew melons, cucumbers and other creeping plants, as well as the vine, the fig and the olive, as now seen on a few cultivated spots. It would be wrong to argue the former capabilities of the Holy Land from its present appearance, as it is now under the curse of God, and its general barrenness is in full accordance with prophetic denunciation.

But the time is fast approaching when, as said Moses, Deut. xxx. 3-5, “That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: and the Lord thy

God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers."—See also Isa. lxi. 4; Ezek. xxxvi. 8; Amos ix. 13-5.

To the antiquary, to the lover of the sublime and beautiful, and, above all, to the child of God, no land abounds with so many attractions as "The Land of Israel." We have connected therewith the earliest and most faithful records of the wonderful providence of God, from the beginning of creation to the redemption of man. Magnificent remains of the oldest cities in the world are there. Its scenery is of the most diversified beauty. The position is best fitted for its becoming what it was appointed to be, "*The glory of all lands.*" IMMANUEL'S LAND may be the earthly centre of MESSIAH'S KINGDOM, when its bounds are extended according to the description of prophecy, as Psalm lxxii.—*The Gospel Treasury.*

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## UNITY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

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The Bible is pervaded by unity. It has, to the fullest extent, that necessary condition of any book which is to make a deep impression upon the minds and hearts of men—singleness of purpose, and that purpose kept in view throughout every page.

The Old and New Testament are but different transcripts of the same great and glorious original. The one is a lock with wards and interstices, and the other is the exquisitely cut key, which, applied to the lock, completely unlocks it, and opens a door of entrance to the bright vision of light and immortality. "They contain," says *Cecil*, "but one scheme of religion. Neither can be understood without the other. . . . They are like the rolls on which they were anciently written. . . . It is but one subject from beginning to end, but the view which we obtain of it grows clearer and clearer as we unwind the roll that contains it." This is undeniably true. Entire harmony exists between Judaism and Christianity. They are but different parts of one system. The one was the stock, gradually growing and strengthening, on which the other, "in the fullness of time," exhibited its bud, unfolded its leaves and diffused its life-giving fragrance. The one was the dawn, the other is the day; the one was the infant, the other is the full grown man. The records of both are the same in authority, substance and mode of communication. The same truth, only not with the same fullness and clearness, was conveyed in "sundry times" and "divers manners" by the prophets, which was made known by the Eternal Word when He "was made flesh and dwelt among us." Through the Patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Prophetic dispensations, the same voice was sounding, only in more distant and feeble tones, which afterwards echoed amongst the hills and valleys of Palestine, as it poured forth the truth in all its divine plenitude and power. The inspired penmen of both economies all struck one grand key-note—Christ, and Him crucified. As in Beethoven's matchless music there runs one idea, worked out through all the changes of measure and of key—now almost hidden, now breaking out in rich, natural melody, whispered in the treble, murmured in the base, dimly suggested in the prelude, but growing clearer and clearer as the work proceeds, winding gradually back until it ends in the key in which it began, and closes in triumphant harmony—so, throughout the Scriptures, there runs one grand idea: man's ruin by sin, and his redemption by grace; in a word, Jesus Christ the Saviour. From the dim promise at the fall to the "Lamb in the midst of the throne," which the Apostle saw from the rocky and barren isle, Jesus is set forth as the burden of the promises, the medium of blessings and the object of saving faith.

Thus is it true that the Book that was written by persons of widely variant profes-



sions, circumstances, idiosyncrasies and trials, is always consistent with itself. Truth is the great and only instrumentality it makes use of, in order to transform, purify and elevate the human character. No matter how its writers teach—whether by history, biography, song, allegory, parable, argument or dogmatic testimony and affirmation, *religious truth* forms the great and essential element in all their instructions. Whatever the subject is of which they treat, they all speak the same thing. Where there was no collusion there is perfect harmony—where there was no preconcert there is perfect concord. They may be compared to a band of musicians playing a grand anthem without previous practice, or to a number of laborers and masons, who, having no idea of the completed appearance of the edifice on which they are employed, lay stone upon stone in blind obedience to the directing architect, until the whole stands forth in sublimity and perfection. The Book which these inspired men wrote is evidently a whole; it has a beginning, a middle and an end; it is the realization of one mind executed by a number of others. The same spirit and feeling pervade the volume. Its ceremonies and dispensations arise naturally from one another. The same golden thread is to be seen running through all its pages—beginning, as it does, with Paradise, which was lost, then stretching itself over long ages, and at length bringing us back again where we started—to the City of God with its Tree of Life. Let a diligent student take up a copy of the Scriptures with copious marginal references, and undertake to collate their instructions upon any one doctrine or moral duty, and he will be surprised at the uniformity of their teaching. They never speak for and against the same doctrine; they never bear witness on both sides of any question; nor is there an instance in which they affirm and deny the same thing. That which in reality has *any* Scripture in its favor, has *all* Scripture in its favor.

These remarks, true of the Bible as a whole, are especially applicable to the Gospels. When the history of a great personage is written by different hands, the historians seldom agree in every particular they record. One begins with his birth, and reminds us of his parentage, his illustrious line and his great ancestors; another, passing over this, takes him up at the commencement of his public career; a *third* not only recites his birth and parentage, but dwells upon the circumstances which preceded him and introduced him, and those which surrounded him when he appeared; and *another* may go further back still into the antecedents, reporting all that he has been able to learn of anterior history that might be supposed to influence his career, or to prepare the times for his appearing. It has pleased God to permit the men who wrote the history of Jesus Christ to exemplify the same diversity of procedure in their narratives. They look at their glorious subject from their respective standpoints. The four books of the Gospel were designed to answer each its specific purpose. They have a side fronting each side of the spiritual world. *Matthew* exhibits chiefly the Jewish and subordinate; *John* the spiritual and divine in our Redeemer; *Mark* His authority over nature and devils; *Luke* His personal history as man. Thus does “the four-sided Gospel,” as Origen called it, resemble four portraits, or four landscapes, all presenting the same objects, but in different lights and from different points of view, and illustrative of one another, yet wholly unsusceptible of mechanical amalgamation, without utterly destroying their distinctive character and even their intrinsic value. So far are the Gospels from being contradictory of, or even different from, one another, that they are substantially the same—distinct views of a complex whole. The great landmarks of the history are unchanged, the same salient points reappear in all, but they are found in new combinations and with new details.

“Viewed as a literary production,” says an eminent scholar, “the Gospel history exists in a four-fold form. But for the ancient, true, churchly view, this circumstance is altogether secondary to the fact that under this four-fold form we have the one Gospel of the Lord. Strictly speaking, therefore, it is not the Gospel of Matthew, etc., as we now are accustomed to say, but the Gospel according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, and according to John. It is this grand unity of character,

of history, of doctrine, and of spirit, which gives to the Gospels their common designation. Though we have four human writings, they form only one Divine record of the Gospel. To doubt this essential unity is to lose to the same extent the capacity for the churchly appreciation and even the Christian understanding of the Gospels." Another observes, in referring to the advantage resulting from the use of a "Harmony of the Gospels"—"one Gospel will thus be found to throw light on another in a hundred ways that would never otherwise be suspected. And as in that beautiful invention of modern days, in which, by combining into one focus two slightly varying aspects of a view, we gain a depth of perspective, and a solidity of form that seems to bring the very original before us, so here, by having stereoscoped into one view these four aspects of our blessed Lord, we are enabled to see greater *reality* in that Divine image which each one separately sets forth." (See Note on John xi. 1.)

The first three Gospels (which for this reason are called *synoptical*) have a marked correspondence with each other. Their verbal and material agreement is such as does not occur in any other books which have been written independently of one another. As for the Gospel of John, it is true that there are differences between it and the other three, yet is a full recognition of this contrast the first requisite for the understanding of the essential harmony of all. These very differences belong to the complete portraiture of the Saviour, which comprised the fullness of an outward presence, as well as the depth of a secret life. The synoptic Gospels contain the Gospel of the infant church; that of John the Gospel of its maturity. This Gospel is supplementary to them, for it assumes facts as known, of which it gives no account, but which are found in them: it is also independent, presenting a different aspect of our Lord's character, while its points of coincidence with the others show the working of the "self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii. 11.) Thus is the Gospel in one sense four-fold, as the streams of Eden, and as those living creatures of the Apostle's vision; but in another sense, one. In the diversity there is unity. The very discrepancies are but deeper harmonies, and the multiformity which characterizes the Gospels written by the holy men who were "moved by the Holy Ghost," is felt to be as necessary as it was natural.

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## ANALYSIS.

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The following may guide the student of the Gospel according to Matthew :

INTRODUCTION. i., ii.

The Royal pedigree (i. 1-17).

The Virgin's Son, the promised Saviour (18-25).

The homage (ii. 1-12).

The persecution (13-23).

(In all the words of prophets are fulfilled.)

1. THE PRELUDE. iii., iv.

(a) *The Baptist* (iii.):

The Messenger (1-6). The Message (7-12). The Recognition (13-17).

(b) THE MESSIAH (iv.):

The Trial (1-11). The Home (12-16). The Message (17).

The Call (18-22). The Work (23-25).

2. THE LAWGIVER AND PROPHEET. v.-xiii.

(a) *The new Law in relation to the old* (v.-vii.).

(b) *The testimony of signs* (viii., ix.).

- Characteristics (viii. 1-15).
- The Suppliant (Resignation, 1-4); the Intercessor (Faith, 5-13); the Restored (Service, 14, 15).
- The Lord and the Disciples (viii. 18-ix. 17).
- Self-denial (18-22).
- Power (Nature, 23-27; Spirits, 28-34; Sin, ix. 1-8).
- Mercy (9-13).
- Prudence (14-17).
- The Results (ix. 18-34).
- Faith confirmed (20-22); raised (23-26); attested (27-31).
- Unbelief hardened (32-34).
- (c) *The Commission* (ix. 36-xi.).
  - The Charge (x.).
  - The Hearers (xi.).
  - John (1-15); the People (16-19).
  - Woes (20-24); Thanksgivings (25-30).
- (d) *The Contrast* (xii.).
  - The letter and the spirit of the Law.
  - Example (1-9); Miracle (10-13).
  - The Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God (22-37).
  - The sign of Jonas (38-45).
  - Natural and Spiritual Kindred (46-50).
- (e) *Parables of the Kingdom*: its rise, growth, consummation (xiii.).
- 3. THE KING. xiv.-xxv.
  - (d) *The character of the King*, compared with Temporal Dominion:
    - The feast of Herod; Death of John (xiv. 1-12).
    - The feast of Christ (Jews); the Disciples saved (13-33).
    - Hierarchical Dominion:
      - The tradition of the Elders (xv. 1-20).
      - The Syrophœnician heard (21-28).
      - The Gentiles healed and fed (29-39).
      - Truth hidden from some (xvi. 1-12), revealed to others (13-20).
  - (b) *Glimpses of the Kingdom*.
    - The prospect of suffering (xvi. 24-28).
    - The vision of glory (xvii. 1-13).
    - The secret source of strength (14-21).
    - The citizens.
    - Moral principles: Obedience: a sign (xvii. 24-27).
    - Humility, Unselfishness, Forgiveness (xviii.).
    - Social characteristics: Marriage, Children, Riches, Sacrifice (xix.).
    - Yet all without intrinsic merit (xx. 1-16).
  - (c) *The King claimed his heritage*.
    - The Journey (xx. 17-34).
    - The Triumphal Entrance (xxi. 1-17).
    - The Conflict (xxi. 18-xxii.).
    - The Sign (xxi. 18-22). The First Question (23-27). The Portraiture (28-xxii. 14). The Temptation (15-40). The Last Question (41-46).
    - The Judgment (xxiii.-xxv.).
    - The Teachers (xxiii.).
    - The City (xxiv.).
    - The World (xxv.).
- 4. DEATH THE GATE OF THE ETERNAL KINGDOM. xxvi.-xxviii.
  - (d) *The Passion* (xxvi., xxvii.).
    - Contrasts: Foreknowledge, Craft (xxvi. 1-8). Love, Treason (6-16).

- The Last Supper: Woes Foreseen and Faced (17-29).
- The Rash Promise: Power Misjudged (30-35).
- The Inward Agony (36-46).
- The Outward Desertion (37-56).
- The Confession of Christ (57-68).
- The Denial of Peter (69-75).
- The Death of Judas (xxvii. 3-10).
- The Death of Christ (11-50).
- Christ and Barabbas (15-26). Christ and the Soldiers (27-31). Christ and the By-standers (52-36).
- The Burial (57-61). The Watch (62-66).
- (b) *The Triumph.*
  - The Rising in Glory (1-10).
  - The False Report (11-15).
  - The Great Commission (16-20).

## SYNOPSIS OF ROBINSON'S HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

### EVENTS CONNECTED WITH THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF OUR LORD. TIME, ABOUT THIRTEEN AND A HALF YEARS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
Preface to Luke's gospel, . . . . .			1:1-4	
An angel appears to <i>Zacharias, Jerusalem,</i> . . . . .			1:5-25	
An angel appears to Mary, <i>Nazareth,</i> . . . . .			1:26-38	
Mary visits Elizabeth, <i>Juttah,</i> . . . . .			1:39-56	
Birth of John the Baptist, <i>Juttah,</i> . . . . .			1:57-80	
An angel appears to Joseph, <i>Nazareth,</i> . . . . .	1:18-25			
The birth of Jesus, <i>Bethlehem,</i> . . . . .			2:1-7	
An angel appears to the shepherds, <i>Near Bethlehem,</i> . . . . .			2:8-20	
The circumcision of Jesus, and his presentation in the temple, <i>Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem,</i> . . . . .			2:21-38	
The magi, <i>Bethlehem,</i> . . . . .	2:1-12			
The flight into Egypt. Herod's cruelty. The return, <i>Bethlehem, Nazareth,</i> . . . . .	2:13-23		2:39-40	
At twelve years of age Jesus goes to the Passover, <i>Jerusalem,</i> . . . . .			2:41-52	
Genealogies, . . . . .	1:1-17		3:23-38	

### ANNOUNCEMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY. TIME, ABOUT ONE YEAR.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
The ministry of John the Baptist, <i>The desert, The Jordan,</i> . . . . .	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-18	
The baptism of Jesus, <i>The Jordan,</i> . . . . .	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-23	
The temptation, <i>Desert of Judea,</i> . . . . .	4:1-11	1:12, 13	4:1-13	
Preface to John's gospel, . . . . .				1:1-18
Testimony of John the Baptist to Jesus, <i>Bethabara beyond Jordan,</i> . . . . .				1:19-34
Jesus gains disciples, <i>The Jordan, Galilee?</i> . . . . .				1:35-51
The marriage at Cana of Galilee, . . . . .				2:1-12

### OUR LORD'S FIRST PASSOVER, AND THE SUBSEQUENT TRANSACTIONS UNTIL THE SECOND. TIME, ONE YEAR.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
At the Passover Jesus drives the traders out of the temple, <i>Jerusalem,</i> . . . . .				2:13-25
Our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, <i>Jerusalem,</i> . . . . .				3:1-21
Jesus remains in Judea and baptizes. Further testimony of John the Baptist, . . . . .	14:3-5	6:17-20	3:19, 20	3:22-36
John's imprisonment, . . . . .	4:12	1:14	4:14	4:1-3
Jesus' departure into Galilee, . . . . .				
Our Lord's discourse with the Samaritan woman. Many of the Samaritans believe on him, <i>Shechem or Neapolis,</i> . . . . .	4:17	1:14, 15	4:14, 15	4:4-42
Jesus teaches publicly in <i>Galilee,</i> . . . . .				4:43-45
Jesus again at Cana, where he heals the son of a nobleman lying ill at Capernaum, <i>Cana of Galilee,</i> . . . . .	4:13-16		4:16-31	4:46-54
Jesus at Nazareth: he is there rejected, and fixes his abode at Capernaum. The call of Simon Peter and Andrew, and of James and John, with the miraculous draught of fishes, <i>Near Capernaum,</i> . . . . .	4:18-22	1:16-20	5:1-11	
The healing of a demoniac in the synagogue, <i>Capernaum,</i> . . . . .		1:21-28	4:31-37	
The healing of Peter's wife, mother, and many others, <i>Capernaum,</i> . . . . .	8:14-17	1:29-34	4:38-41	
Jesus with his disciples goes from Capernaum throughout Galilee, . . . . .	4:23-25	1:35-39	4:42-44	
The healing of a leper, <i>Galilee,</i> . . . . .	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
The healing of a paralytic, <i>Capernaum,</i> . . . . .	9:2-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
The call of Matthew, <i>Capernaum,</i> . . . . .	9:9	2:13, 14	5:27, 28	

OUR LORD'S SECOND PASSOVER, AND THE SUBSEQUENT TRANSACTIONS UNTIL THE THIRD.

TIME, ONE YEAR.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
The Pool of Bethesda; the healing of the infirm man; and our Lord's subsequent discourse. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	12:1-8	2:23-23	6:1-5	5:1-47
The disciples pluck ears of grain on the Sabbath. <i>On the way to Galilee?</i>	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
The healing of the withered hand on the Sabbath. <i>Galilee.</i>				
Jesus arrives at the sea of Tiberias, and is followed by multitudes. <i>Lake of Galilee.</i>	12:15-21	3:7-12		
Jesus withdraws to the mountain and chooses the twelve; the multitudes follow him. <i>Near Capernaum.</i>	10:1-4	3:13-19	6:12-19	
The sermon on the mount. <i>Near Capernaum.</i>	5:1; 8:1		6:20-49	
The healing of the centurion's servant. <i>Capernaum.</i>	8:5-13		7:1-10	
The raising of the widow's son. <i>Nain.</i>			7:11-17	
John the Baptist in prison sends disciples to Jesus. <i>Galilee. Capernaum?</i>	11:2-19		7:18-35	
Reflections of Jesus on appealing to his mighty works. <i>Capernaum.</i>	11:20-30			
While sitting at meat with a Pharisee, Jesus is anointed by a woman who had been a sinner. <i>Capernaum?</i>			7:36-50	
Jesus, with the Twelve, makes a second circuit in Galilee.			8:1-3	
The healing of a demoniac. The Scribes and Pharisees blaspheme. <i>Galilee.</i>	12:22-37	3:19-30	{ 11:14, 15 17 23	
The Scribes and Pharisees seek a sign. Our Lord's reflections. <i>Galilee.</i>	12:38-45		11:16, 24-36	
The true disciples of Christ his nearest relatives. <i>Galilee.</i>	12:46-50	3:31-35	8:19-21	
At a Pharisee's table Jesus denounces woes against the Pharisees and others. <i>Galilee.</i>			11:37-54	
Jesus discourses to his disciples and the multitude. <i>Galilee.</i>			12:1-59	
The slaughter of certain Galileans. Parable of the barren fig tree. <i>Galilee.</i>			13:1-9	
Parable of the sower. <i>Lake of Galilee. Near Capernaum?</i>	13:1-23	4:1-25	8:4-18	
Parable of the tares. Other parables. <i>Near Capernaum?</i>	13:24-33	4:26-34		
Jesus directs to cross the lake. Incidents. The tempest stilled. <i>Lake of Galilee.</i>	8:18-27	4:35-41	{ 8:22-25 18:57-62	
The two demoniacs of Gadara. <i>South-east coast of the lake of Galilee.</i>	8:28-34	5:1-21	8:26-40	
Levi's Feast. <i>Capernaum.</i>	9:1		5:29-39	
The raising of Jairus' daughter. The woman with a bloody flux. <i>Capernaum.</i>	9:10-17	2:15-22	8:41-56	
Two blind men healed, and a dumb spirit cast out. <i>Capernaum.</i>	9:18-26	5:22-43		
Jesus again at Nazareth, and again rejected.	9:27-34	6:1-6		
A third circuit in Galilee. The twelve instructed and sent forth. <i>Galilee.</i>	9:35-38 10:1-42 11:1	6:6-13	9:1-6	
Herod holds Jesus to be John the Baptist, whom he had just before beheaded. <i>Galilee? Perca.</i>	14:1-12	{ 6:14-16, 21-29	9:7-9	
The Twelve return, and Jesus retires with them across the lake. Five thousand are fed. <i>Capernaum. North-east coast of the lake of Galilee.</i>	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-14
Jesus walks upon the water. <i>Lake of Galilee. Gennesaret.</i>	14:22-35	6:45-56		8:15-21
Our Lord's discourse to the multitude in the synagogue at Capernaum. Many disciples turn back. Peter's profession of faith. <i>Capernaum.</i>				{ 8:22-71 7:1

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

TIME, SIX MONTHS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
Our Lord justifies his disciples for eating with unwashed hands. Pharisaic traditions. <i>Capernaum.</i>	15:1-20	7:1-23		
The daughter of a Syrophenician woman is healed. <i>Region of Tyre and Sidon.</i>	15:21-23	7:24-30		
A deaf and dumb man healed; also many others. Four thousand are fed. <i>The Decapolis.</i>	15:29-39	{ 7:31-37 8:1-9		
The Pharisees and Sadducees again require a sign. <i>Near Magdala.</i>	15:39 16:1-4	8:10-12		
The disciples cautioned against the leaven of the Pharisees, etc. <i>North-east coast of the lake of Galilee.</i>	16:5-12	8:13-21 8:22-26		
A blind man healed. <i>Bethsaida, (Julias).</i>				
Peter and the rest again profess their faith in Christ. <i>Region of Cesarea Philippi.</i>	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21	
Our Lord foretells his own death and resurrection, and the trials of his followers. <i>Region of Cesarea Philippi.</i>	16:21-28	{ 8:31-38 9:1	9:22-27	
The transfiguration. Our Lord's subsequent discourse with the three disciples. <i>Region of Cesarea Philippi.</i>	17:1-13	9:2-13	9:28-36	
The healing of a demoniac whom the disciples could not heal. <i>Region of Cesarea Philippi.</i>	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43	
Jesus again foretells his own death and resurrection. <i>Galilee.</i>	17:22, 23	9:30-32	9:43-45	
The tribute-money miraculously provided. <i>Capernaum.</i>	17:24-27	9:33		
The disciples contend who should be greatest. Jesus exhorts to humility, forbearance and brotherly love. <i>Capernaum.</i>	18:1-35	9:33-50	9:46-50 10:1-16	
The Seventy instructed and sent out. <i>Capernaum.</i>				
Jesus goes up to the festival of tabernacles. His final departure from Galilee. Incidents in Samaria.			9:51-56 17:11-19	7:2-10
Ten lepers cleansed. <i>Samaria.</i>				

THE FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES, AND THE SUBSEQUENT TRANSACTIONS UNTIL OUR LORD'S ARRIVAL IN BETHANY, SIX DAYS BEFORE THE FOURTH PASSOVER.

TIME, SIX MONTHS, LESS SIX DAYS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
Jesus at the festival of tabernacles. His public teaching. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				7:11-53
The woman taken in adultery. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				8:1
Further public teaching of our Lord. He reproves the unbelieving Jews, and escapes from their hands. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				8:12-59
A lawyer instructed. Love to our neighbor defined. Parable of the good Samaritan. <i>Near Jerusalem.</i>			10:25-37	

THE FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES, AND THE SUBSEQUENT TRANSACTIONS UNTIL OUR LORD'S ARRIVAL IN BETHIANY, SIX DAYS BEFORE THE FOURTH PASSOVER.—Continued.  
TIME, SIX DAYS LESS SIX MONTHS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
Jerusalem in the house of Martha and Mary. <i>Bethany.</i>			10:38-42	
The disciples again taught how to pray. <i>Near Jerusalem.</i>			11:1-13	
The seventy return. <i>Jerusalem.</i>			10:17-24	{ 9:1-41 10:1-21
A man born blind is healed on the Sabbath. Our Lord's subsequent discourses. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				
Jesus in Jerusalem at the festival of dedication. He retires beyond Jordan. <i>Jerusalem. Bethabara beyond Jordan.</i>				10:22-42 11:1-46
The raising of Lazarus. <i>Bethany.</i>				11:47-54
The counsel of Caiaphas against Jesus. He retires from Jerusalem. <i>Jerusalem. Ephraim.</i>				
Jesus beyond Jordan is followed by multitudes. The healing of the infirm woman on the Sabbath. <i>Valley of Jordan. Pera.</i>	19:1, 2	10:1	13:10-21	
Our Lord goes teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. He is warned against Herod. <i>Pera.</i>			13:22-35	
Our Lord dines with a chief Pharisee on the Sabbath. Incidents. <i>Pera.</i>			14:1-24	
What is required of true disciples. <i>Pera.</i>			14:25-35	
Parable of the lost sheep, etc. Parable of the prodigal son. <i>Pera.</i>			15:1-32	
Parable of the unjust steward. <i>Pera.</i>			16:1-13	
The Pharisee reproved. Parable of the rich man and Lazarus. <i>Pera.</i>			16:14-31	
Jesus inculcates forbearance, faith, humility. <i>Pera.</i>			17:1-40	
Christ's coming will be sudden. <i>Pera.</i>			17:20-37	
Parables: the importunate widow; the Pharisee and publican. <i>Pera.</i>			18:1-14	
Precepts respecting divorce. <i>Pera.</i>	19:3-12	10:2-12		
Jesus receives and blesses little children. <i>Pera.</i>	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17	
The rich young man. Parable of the laborers in the vineyard. <i>Pera.</i>	19:16-30	10:17-31	18:18-30	
Jesus a third time foretells his death and resurrection. <i>Pera.</i>	20:1-16		18:31-34	
James and John prefer their ambitious request. <i>Pera.</i>	20:17-19		10:32-34	
The healing of two blind men near Jericho.	20:20-28		10:35-45	{ 18:35-43 19:1
The visit to Zaccheus. Parable of the ten pounds. <i>Jericho.</i>	20:29-34	10:46-52	19:2-28	
Jesus arrives at Bethany six days before the Passover. <i>Bethany.</i>				{ 11:55-57 12:1, 9-11

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

TIME, FOUR DAYS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
Our Lord's public entry into Jerusalem. <i>Bethany. Jerusalem.</i>	{ 21:1-11 14-17	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
The barren fig-tree. The cleansing of the temple. <i>Bethany. Jeru- salem.</i>	21:12, 13 18, 19	11:12-19	{ 19:45-48 21:37-38	
The barren fig-tree withers away. <i>Between Bethany and Jerusalem.</i>	21:20-22	11:20-26		
Christ's authority questioned. Parable of the two sons. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	21:23-32	11:27-33	20:1-8	
Parable of the wicked husbandmen. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-19	
Parable of the marriage of the king's son. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	22:1-14			
Insidious question of the Pharisees; tribute to Cesar. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
Insidious questions of the Sadducees; the resurrection. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	22:23-33	12:18-27	20:27-40	
A lawyer questions Jesus. The two great commandments. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	22:34-40	12:28-34		
How is Christ the son of David? <i>Jerusalem.</i>	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
Warnings against the evil example of the scribes and Pharisees. <i>Jeru- salem.</i>	23:1-12	12:38, 39	20:45, 46	
Woes against the scribes and Pharisees. Lamentation over Jerusalem. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	23:13-39	12:40	20:47	
The widow's mite. <i>Jerusalem.</i>		12:41-44	21:1-4	12:29-36 12:37-50
Certain Greeks desire to see Jesus. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				
Reflections upon the unbelief of the Jews. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				
Jesus, on taking leave of the temple, foretells its destruction, and the per- secution of his disciples. <i>Jerusalem. Mount of Olives.</i>	24:1-14	13:1-13	21:5-19	
The signs of Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to put an end to the Jewish state and dispensation. <i>Mount of Olives.</i>	24:15-42	13:14-37	21:20-26	
Transition to Christ's final coming at the day of judgment. Exhorta- tion to watchfulness. Parables: the ten virgins; the five talents. <i>Mount of Olives.</i>	24:13-51 25:1-30			
Scenes of the judgment-day. <i>Mount of Olives.</i>	25:31-46			
The rulers conspire. The supper at Bethany. Treachery of Judas. <i>Jerusalem. Bethany.</i>	26:1-16	14:1-11	22:1-6	12:2-8
Preparation for the Passover. <i>Bethany. Jerusalem.</i>	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	

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

TIME, TWO DAYS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
The Passover meal. Contention among the twelve. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	26:20	14:17	{ 22:14-18, 24-30	
Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				13:1-20
Jesus points out the traitor. Judas withdraws. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	26:21-25	14:18-21	22:21-23	13:21-25
Jesus foretells the fall of Peter, and the dispersion of the Twelve. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				
The Lord's supper. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	26:31-35	14:27-31	22:31-33	13:36-38
Jesus comforts his disciples. The Holy Spirit promised. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	26:26-29	14:22-25	22:19, 30	1 Cor. 11:23-25
Christ the true vine. His disciples hated by the world. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				15:1-27
Persecution foretold. Further promise of the Holy Spirit. Prayer in the name of Christ. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				16:1-33
Christ's last prayer with his disciples. <i>Jerusalem.</i>				17:1-26
The agony in Gethsemane. <i>Mount of Olives.</i>	26:30, 36-46	14:26, 32-42	22:39-46	18:1
Jesus betrayed and made prisoner. <i>Mount of Olives.</i>	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-12
Jesus before Caiaphas. Peter thrice denies him. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	26:57, 58 69-75	14:53, 54 66-72	22:54-62	{ 18:13-18, 25-27
Jesus before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim. He declares himself to be the Christ; is condemned and mocked. <i>Jerusalem.</i>	26:59-68	11:55-65	22:63-71	18:19-24

THE FOURTH PASSOVER, OUR LORD'S PASSION, AND THE ACCOMPANYING EVENTS UNTIL THE END OF THE JEWISH SABBATH.—Continued.  
TIME, TWO DAYS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
The Sanhedrim lead Jesus away to Pilate. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:1, 2	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
Christ before the Governor. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:11-14			
Jesus before Herod. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .			23:6-12	
Pilate seeks to release Jesus. The Jews demand Barabbas. <i>Jerusalem</i>	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:39, 40
Pilate delivers up Jesus to death. He is scourged and mocked. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:26-30	15:15-19		19:1-3
Pilate again seeks to release Jesus. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:31-34	15:20-23	23:26-33	19:4-16
Judas repents and hangs himself. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:32-10	15:24-28	23:33-34	Acts 1:18, 19
Jesus is led away to be crucified. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:35-38	15:24-28	23:33-34	19:16, 17
The crucifixion. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:39-44	15:29-32	{ 23:35-37, 39-43	19:18-24
The Jews mock at Jesus on the cross. He commends his mother } to John. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:45-50	15:33-37	23:44-46	19:25-27
Darkness prevails. Christ expires on the cross. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:51-56	15:38-41	{ 23:45, 47- 49	19:28-30
The veil of the temple rent, and graves opened. Judgment of the } centurion. The women at the cross. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:31-42
The taking down from the cross. The burial. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	27:62-66			
The watch at the sepulchre. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .				

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION, HIS SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES, AND HIS ASCENSION.  
TIME, FORTY DAYS.

	MATT.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
The morning of the resurrection. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	28:2-4	16:1		
Visit of the women to the sepulchre. Mary Magdalene returns. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	28:1	16:2-4	24:1-3	20:1, 2
Vision of angels in the sepulchre. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	28:5-7	16:5-7	24:4-8	
The women return to the city. Jesus meets them. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	28:9-10	16:8	24:9-11	
Peter and John run to the sepulchre. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .			24:12	20:3-10
Our Lord is seen by Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .	28:11-15	16:9-11		20:11-13
Report of the watch. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .				
Our Lord is seen by Peter. Then by two disciples on the way to Emmaus. <i>Jerusalem, Emmaus</i> , . . . . .		16:12, 13	24:13-35	1 Cor. 15:5
Jesus appears in the midst of the apostles, Thomas being absent. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .		16:14-18	24:36-49	20:19-23
Jesus appears in the midst of the apostles, Thomas being present. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .				20:24-29
The apostles go away into Galilee. Jesus shows himself to seven of them at the sea of Tiberias. <i>Galilee</i> , . . . . .	28:16			21:1-24
Jesus meets the apostles and above five hundred brethren on a mountain in Galilee. <i>Galilee</i> , . . . . .	28:16-20			1 Cor. 15:6 1 Cor. 15:7 { Acts 1:3-8
Our Lord is seen of James; then of all the apostles. <i>Jerusalem</i> , . . . . .				{ 20:30, 31 21:25
The ascension. <i>Bethany</i> , . . . . .		16:19, 20	24:50-53	
Conclusion of John's gospel. . . . .				







# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

## CHAPTER I.

<sup>1</sup> *The genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Joseph.* 18 *He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary when she was espoused to Joseph.* 19 *The angel satisfieth the misdeeming thoughts of Joseph, and interpreteth the names of Christ.*

**T**HE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, <sup>b</sup>the son of David, <sup>c</sup>the son of Abraham. <sup>a</sup>Luke iii. 23; Ps. cxxxii. 11; Isa. xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5. <sup>b</sup>Chap xxii. 42; John vii. 42; Acts ii. 30, xiii. 23; Rom. i. 3. <sup>c</sup>Gen. xii. 3, xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 16.

THE BOOK OF THE GENERATION is an expression purely Jewish, and means "table or roll of the genealogy." The same expression occurs in this sense in Gen. v. 1, and the resemblance in the language there employed in reference to "the first man Adam" (1 Cor. xv. 45), "who is the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. v. 14), and that which is here used in regard to "the last Adam" (1 Cor. xv. 45), is intended to imply that there is a certain relation or resemblance between the Old and New Testaments, so that the one is, in many respects, the very counterpart of the other. This title (as appears from the remainder of the first verse) strictly refers to what follows, to the close of the seventeenth verse, though its force extends also to the whole book, including the history of our Lord's birth, acts, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension. The Evangelist, designing to write a narrative of our Saviour's life, naturally began with His pedigree.

*Jesus:* The Old Testament begins with the account of the creation of the world; the New with that of the incarnation of Him who created the world. (John i. 3.) This name is the same with *Joshua* in Hebrew, which means *God is helper* or *deliverer*. It signifies a *Saviour*, and was given to our Lord by divine appointment (verse 21). *Christ*, in Greek, is the same with *Messiah* in Hebrew, both signifying *anointed*.

Under this title He was earnestly waited for by the Jews, and even by the Samaritans. (John iv. 25.) As under the law, kings (1 Sam. xxiv. 6, 10), priests (Lev. iv. 5, 16) and prophets (1 Kings xix. 16) were all anointed with oil, the symbol of the necessary spiritual gifts, to consecrate them to their respective offices, so Jesus was anointed for accomplishing our salvation (Luke iv. 18, 21; Acts x. 38). *Jesus* is the *Personal*, *Christ* the *Official* name of our Lord. He calls Himself *Jesus Christ* (John xvii. 3). In the Acts and Epistles this compound appellation is often found. *The Son of David, the Son of Abraham*, i. e., *the Son of David and of Abraham*, for the word *son* in both cases refers to Jesus Christ; and here, as often elsewhere in Scripture, it signifies *descendant* at any distance of descent. Our Lord is thus designated because, as Abraham was the *first* from whose family it was predicted that Messiah should spring (Gen. xxii. 18), so David was the *last*; and being the last, Christ is called his son, as though David had been His immediate father. As Matthew wrote more particularly for the Jews, he traces the Lord's genealogy to David the Jewish King, and to Abraham, the founder of the Jewish dispensation. That the Messiah was to descend from the royal line of David was firmly believed by the Jews. (Is. ix. 7, xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 6.) And David's descent from Abraham was unquestionable. That even to the time of Christ the Jews had genealogical tables both of their families and tribes, is evident from Josephus, who, having given the genealogy of his family, says: "I give you the succession of our family as I found it written in the public tables." Matthew, in this genealogical

table, adopts three series of *fourteen* as a convenient mode of reckoning and as easy for reference. They are the three principal eras in the history of the Hebrews: the reign of David, the commencement of the Babylonian captivity, and the birth of the Messiah. They are as follows:

1 Abraham,	David,	Jechoniah,
2 Isaac,	Solomon,	Salathiel,
3 Jacob,	Rehoboam,	Zorobabel,
4 Judah,	Abia,	Abiud,
5 Pharez,	Asa,	Eliakim,
6 Hezrom,	Jehosaphat,	Azor,
7 Aram,	Jehoram,	Sadoc,
8 Aminadab,	Ahaziah,	Achim,
9 Naasson,	Jotham,	Eliud,
10 Salmon,	Ahaz,	Eleazar,
11 Boaz,	Hezekiah,	Matthan,
12 Obed,	Manasseh,	Jacob,
13 Jesse,	Amon,	Joseph,
14 David,	Josiah,	Jesus, who is called Christ.

In the reigns of the kings of Israel, one and the same year is often reckoned both as the last year of one king, and as the first year of his successor. It seems beyond question that Matthew has acted on the same principle, and hence David is the last of the first fourteen, and the first of the second fourteen.

"Many great volumes of history," says *Leighton*, "have been written of states and kingdoms of the earth, and lives of particular famous men, and the reading of them may delight and inform the mind; but what are they all, how empty and comfortless stuff in respect of this history! *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ*. This is the gospel, the alone good tidings to all nations and all ages; still fresh, and equally good news from one generation to another. Had not the virgin borne this Son, we must say, all of us, "good for us if we had not been born."

2. <sup>a</sup>Abraham begat Isaac; and <sup>c</sup>Isaac begat Jacob; and <sup>b</sup>Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; <sup>d</sup>Gen. xxi. 2, 3. <sup>e</sup>Gen. xxv. 26. <sup>f</sup>Gen. xxix. 35. See on Luke iii. 23-38.

*Abraham*: Matthew now *descends* in his enumeration, though in verse 1 he *ascended*. The fact that he begins, not from Adam, but from Abraham, does not imply the excluding of the Gentiles (comp. chap. xxviii. 19), for in Abraham all nations are

blessed. *Begat Isaac*. (See Gen. xxi. 2.) *Jacob*—(Gen. xxv. 26). *Judas*—(Gen. xxix.) the Greek method of expressing the word *Judah*. Only the fourth son of Jacob is here named, as it was from his loins that Messiah was to spring. (Gen. xlix. 10.) *And his brethren*. At several points in the genealogy there are individual matters added, not forming an essential part of the lineage, such as the clause *and his brethren* in this verse, and *Zara of Thamar* in verse 3; in *Rachab*, in verse 5, and of her that *had been the wife of Urias*, in verse 6.

3. And <sup>a</sup>Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and <sup>b</sup>Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; <sup>c</sup>Gen. xxxviii. 27, &c. <sup>d</sup>Ruth iv. 18, &c.; 1 Chron. ii. 5, 9, &c.

*Phares* and *Zara*—a twin brother. (Gen. xxxviii. 27.) From Phares to David the genealogy is furnished in Ruth iv. 18-22. *Thamar*. Matthew mentions in the list four *women*, two of them Gentiles by birth—*Rachab* and *Ruth*. Thamar receives memorable notice in the Book of Ruth (iv. 12). *Esrom begat Aram*. In several names of the genealogy there are slight departures from the sounds of the same names in the Old Testament, on account of the different powers of the Hebrew language, and of the Greek. Thus *Esrom* is the same as *Hezron* in the Old Testament. *Aram*, verse 4, is the same as *Ram* in 1 Chron. ii. 10; *Naasson*, the same as *Nahson*; *Booz*, in verse 5, is the same as *Boaz* (Ruth iv. 21), and *Ozias*, in verse 8, is the same as *Uzziah*.

4. And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon. 5. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

*Naasson* was contemporary with *Moses*, and from him to David was about 492 years. Between Phares and Aminadab, also, there was a space of 240 years. From these facts it would appear that many links are passed over. *Rachab*—evidently Rahab of Jericho is meant. She is one of the "cloud of witnesses," whose faith is mentioned by Paul (Heb. xi. 31), and whose works are appealed to by James (ii. 25). For her remarkable history see Joshua ii. and vi. This is the only place in the Bible where her marriage is recorded. For the lovely history of Ruth the Moabitess, see the book in the Bible which bears her name.

6. And Jesse begat David the king; and David the King begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.—1 Sam. xvi. 1, xvii. 12. <sup>2</sup>2 Sam. xii. 24.

*David the King.* David's royalty is twice mentioned here, as is the Babylonian captivity afterwards. The same title is implied after the names of Solomon and his successors as far as verse 11. David is, however, called especially *the king*, not only because he is the first king in this series, but also because his throne is given to Messiah. (See Luke i. 32.) That the record of David's royal line was preserved we are expressly told by Josephus, who says in his autobiography: "I am myself of the royal lineage by my mother." *Of her that had been the wife of Urias; literally of her (who was) Urias's.*

7. And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; 8. And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; 9. And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; 10. And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; 11. And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

<sup>1</sup>1 Chron. iii. 10, &c. <sup>2</sup>2 Kings xx. 21; 1 Chron. iii. 13. <sup>3</sup>See 1 Chron. iii. 15, 16. <sup>4</sup>2 Kings xxiv. 14-16; xxv. 11; 1 Chron. xxxvi. 20; Jer. xxvii. 20; xxxix. 9, lvii. 11, 15, 28-30; Dan. i. 2.

In verses 7 and 8 three kings are omitted—Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah. (See 1 Chron. iii. 11, 12.) The reason why these, rather than other names, are omitted, must be sought, perhaps, in religious considerations—either in the connection of those kings, through Athaliah, with the house of Ahab, in their slender right to be regarded as true links in the theocratic chain, or in some similar disqualification. There are also other omissions. In order to abbreviate a long list of names, omissions like these were common, as they are at the present day among the Arabians, who trace their descent from Abraham. Such omissions do not, of course, impair the genealogy, *as a whole*, for the principal point to be obtained is secured, that is, the tracing of the genealogy to a particular individual, and doing this in a way that cannot lead to mistakes.

Ozias was the son of Amaziah, yet it is here stated that *Joram begat Ozias*. (Verse 8.) This is in perfect keeping with the custom of the Jews, to call not only sons proper, but also grandchildren and great-grandchildren, *sons*. Accordingly, a man is said to beget a child that was by several generations removed by him. (Comp. Is. xxxix. 7.)

*About the time they were carried away, &c., literally, of their migration.* Reference is had not to any one captivity, but to all that took place in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The greater captivities took place in the 1st, 8th, and 19th years, the minor captivities in the 7th, 18th, and 23d years of his reign.

12. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; 13. And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14. And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim, and Achim begat Eliud; 15. And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob.

<sup>1</sup>1 Chron. iii. 17, 18, 19. <sup>2</sup>Ezra iii. 2; Neh. xii. 1; Hag. i. 1.

*Brought to Babylon:* The Jews avoided the word "captivity" as too bitter a recollection, and our Evangelist studiously respects the national feeling. *Jechonias*, mentioned in verse 11, is called in the Old Testament *Jehoiakim*, and is to be distinguished from the *Jechonias* mentioned in verse 12, whose father he was. *Jechonias begat Salathiel*. (See 1 Chron. iii. 17.) This *Jechonias* is called in the Old Testament *Jehoiachin*, or *Jeconiah*, or *Coniah*. There is no contradiction here of the record in Jer. xxii. 30 that this man was written childless, for what follows explains in what sense this was meant, "for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David." *He was to have seed, but no reigning child.* *And Salathiel begat Zorobabel*. (See Ezra iii. 2; Neh. xii. 1; Hag. i. 1.) But it would appear from 1 Chron. iii. 19, that Zerubbabel was Salathiel's grandson, being the son of Pedaiah, whose name, for some reason unknown, is omitted. The word *begat*, as already remarked, is used in the Scriptures with a much broader application than among us. It is employed in reference to a person's remote descendants, as well as to his immediate descendants. Zorobabel (whose name means "He of the dispersion of Babylon") was governor of Judah, a famous type as well as ancestor of our Lord. (See Hag. i. 14, ii. 2.) The names in verses 13-15 are not found in the Old Testament, but were doubtless taken from the public or family registers, which the Jews kept, and their accuracy was never challenged.

16. And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

*Jacob begat Joseph, &c.:* From this we

gather that we have here the genealogy of *Joseph* (who was descended from David through the legitimate royal line of the house of David) and not that of *Mary*.

Matthew says, purposely, not as in the preceding cases, "Joseph begat Jesus," but calls Joseph only the *husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, &c.* (See on verse 1.) As Jesus passed among the Jews for the son of Joseph, his foster-father, Divine Providence has arranged it that this foster-father of Jesus was a descendant of David. In tracing back the origin of Christ, Matthew followed the male line, because his Gospel was primarily written for the Jews, and such a lineage only with them was legal. He intended by this catalogue of names to furnish legal proof of the assertion that Jesus Christ was "the son of David, the son of Abraham." Luke, on the other hand, who wrote his gospel for the Gentiles, traced our Saviour's pedigree upward from Heli, the father of Mary. (See on Luke iii. 23-38.)

*All the generations, &c.* A generation may here probably denote a *period of time*, or mean of calculation, by the general (not individual) course of human life. Allowing for the general diminution of human longevity, each of these divisions may have occupied the number of fourteen periods of time, equivalent, each of them, to the ordinary continuance of a generation of mankind at the periods, respectively.

Dr. J. A. Alexander says: "The meaning cannot be that there were really, in point of fact, just fourteen generations in the several intervals here mentioned, for we know from the Old Testament that four names are omitted in the second period, and have reason to believe that others may be wanting in the third. It rather means the contrary, namely, that, although there were more generations in the actual succession, only fourteen are here given, for the sake of uniformity, in each of the three periods. So far from being a mistake or an intentional misrepresentation, it is really a caution to the reader against falling into the very mistake which some would charge upon the writer. As if he had said: "Let it be observed that this is not a complete list of the generations between Abraham and Christ, but that

some names are omitted, so as to leave fourteen in each great division of the history of Israel." It was a common practice with the Jews to distribute genealogies into divisions, each containing some favorite or mystical number, and, in order to do this, generations were either repeated or left out.

Some of the names in the catalogue of our Lord's ancestors remind us of shameful and sad histories. It includes all sorts of men, kings, heroes, shepherds, mechanics, heathens, sinners, prophets, poets, sages, and they become poorer and obscurer as they approach Christ. Being in the line from which the Messiah was to come did not necessarily make one righteous, nor was the character of Jesus in the least defiled by the depravity of some of His ancestors. Those who take pride in their ancestry should remember this

Whatever difficulties may now exist in relation to the genealogical tables of Matthew and Luke (see on Luke iii. 23-38), it is certain that the early enemies of Christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, many of whom were acute, learned, and able, found no difficulty with these tables. This shows that at a time when it was easy to understand these tables they were believed to be correct. Had they contained error, they would undoubtedly have been assailed and exposed.

From this list of names we learn, 1. That God always keeps His word. His promise concerning a Saviour (Gen. xii. 3; Isai. xi. 1) was literally fulfilled. Christians should remember this lesson, and take comfort. Their Father in heaven will be true to all His engagements. (2 Tim. ii. 13.) 2. The greatness of the mercy and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Think how defiled and unclean our nature is, and then think what a condescension it was in Him to be born of a woman, and "made in the likeness of sinful flesh!" 3. That no one who partakes of human nature can be beyond the reach of Christ's sympathy and compassion. However numerous and aggravated our sins may have been, they cannot shut us out of heaven, if we repent and believe the Gospel. 4. That the two dispensations under which God has revealed Himself are the same. "The genealogy of Christ," as has well been said, "serves

to connect Jesus and His teachings with all God's revelations and promises that had been given before. It binds all generations together in one moral system, showing us that there is for all generations one God and one religion, whose principles do not change. It proclaims that it has come, not to tell men of an unknown God, but of Him who made a covenant with Abraham and an oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and unto Israel for an everlasting covenant; the same God to whom David poured out of his Psalms of praise, the same God whose will, whose principles of government, all the prophets had made known."

18. ¶ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.—Luke i. 27. ¶ Luke i. 35.

The Evangelist now proceeds to furnish in the history of the Saviour's birth the proofs of His Divine *Incarnation*; that is, His embodiment in the flesh. *Birth* here denotes both the *conception* and the *nativity* of Christ. *On this wise*, thus, or, in the following manner—an intimation that it was not in the ordinary and natural way. By becoming incarnate, Jesus could—1, explain and recommend holiness to us by His life as well as His doctrines; 2, render satisfaction to the Divine law in the nature in which the debt had been contracted; 3, be a merciful and faithful high priest and mediator between God and man (Heb. ii. 17, iv. 15), and 4, having authority as God, and being visible as man, He could be a proper person to judge the world. *His Mother Mary*. The sacred history records but few incidents of the life of Mary after the infancy of the Messiah. (See John ii. 3; Mark iii. 20; John xix. 25–27; Acts i. 14.) A veil is drawn over her character and history, as though with the design to reprove that wretched idolatry of which she was made the subject when Christianity became corrupt and paganized.

Enough has been given us by the Evangelists to show that she was a woman of great excellence; but they have not given us the least possible ground for supposing that she was without actual sin—an opinion that became very general about

six hundred years ago—or that she was conceived without sin ("Immaculate Conception")—a notion which originated a little later, and was formally decreed in 1854 as an article of belief for the entire Roman Catholic world. *Was espoused to Joseph*. No woman of Israel was married unless she had been first betrothed. Some time elapsed before she was taken home to the house of her husband. (See Deut. xx. 7; Judg. xiv. 7, 8.) The espousal of Mary to Joseph was for the safety of Christ, who, having afterward to flee into Egypt, had His reputed father to take care of Him, and for the credit and reputation of Mary, God would have His people free from the least suspicion of evil. Joseph was of regal descent (verse 20), but he resided in the small and not very reputable town of Nazareth, in the occupation of a carpenter. (Chap. xiii. 55.) *Before they came together*—before they entered into the full relation of man and wife—*she was found with child*, was discovered to be; no doubt Mary disclosed to Joseph her condition, which she had concealed from every one else. *Of the Holy Ghost*: So that the Lord, being the child of a purely human mother and of a Divine Father, should at once be the Son of Man and the Son of God—the God-man. *Ghost* is derived from the Saxon word *gast*, and signifies *Spirit*. *Holy Ghost* is, therefore, precisely synonymous with *Holy Spirit*. The events here recorded are profoundly mysterious. They are truths which we have not mind enough to fathom. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) Let us not attempt to explain things which are above our feeble reason. We cannot comprehend how the soul and body are united in a man and so make one person; we should not therefore speculate as to how the Divine and human nature were united in Jesus so as to make but one person, but believe the precious truth with reverence. Let us often meditate upon this single event in the history of our race that bridges over the stupendous chasm between God and man. Considered with purity of intention, no fact recorded in the Bible has greater power to bring the soul near to its Maker.

19. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.—Deut. xxiv. 1.

The phrase *just man* may imply Joseph's kindness and tenderness, as well as his integrity. He did not think it consistent with his character to retain one as his wife who appeared to have broken her conjugal faith. And he was minded to put Mary away secretly, because he was unwilling to publish the matter, and expose to infamy, and subject to the punishment which the law permitted in the case of such as broke the marriage vow (Lev. xx. 10; John viii. 5), one to whom he had been tenderly attached, and in whose piety everything else had led him to confide. Joseph's conduct here is a beautiful example of godly wisdom and tender consideration for others. Though he saw "the appearance of evil," he did nothing rashly. He waited patiently to have the line of duty made clear. (See Isa. xxviii. 16.)

20. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

\*Luke i. 35. \*Luke i. 31. †Acts iv. 12; v. 31, xiii. 23, 33.

Joseph reflected what course to pursue, but was not left long in doubt. *The angel of the Lord*, doubtless the Angel Gabriel, who had already conveyed wondrous tidings to Zacharias, and to Mary (Luke i. 19, 26, 27), appeared unto him in a dream. Though dreams are generally the vain vagaries of our sleeping hours, which no sensible man usually regards, yet God has often made them the means of communicating warnings and directions. (See Gen. xx. 3; xxviii. 12; xxxi. 11, 24; Num. xii. 6; 1 Kings iii. 5.) The Joseph of the New Testament, like the Joseph of the Old Testament, uniformly received his revelations in dreams. *Saying, Joseph.* In visions, those to whom they come are generally addressed by name, as acquaintances. (Acts ix. 4, 10; x. 3, 13.) *Thou Son of David*—a man simple in character, but illustrious by descent. *Fear not*—do not doubt or hesitate to take unto thee—to the companionship of life and board, *Mary, thy wife*; among the Jews the betrothed bore the title of wife. *That which is conceived in her, the*

child yet unborn is usually spoken of in the neuter gender. *Is of the Holy Ghost.* (Comp. Luke i. 35.) By this we are to understand simply that Divine power was imparted to the human person of the virgin, from which a being of perfect holiness should be conceived and born, blending the Divine and the human natures. *Shall bring forth a son.* There is something very delightful in the idea that the Saviour was first presented as an *infant* in our world. It proves at once that His errand was one of mercy. *Thou shalt call*—the second person. Thus the office of a father is committed to Joseph. Matthew speaks most of Joseph. Afterward, when the truth was generally known, the first place was given to Mary. (Comp. Luke i. 31.) *His name JESUS.* (See on verse 1.) The reason for giving the name Jesus to the Son of Man was peculiar: *for he shall save his people from their sins*—the lost sheep of the house of Israel first, then, on the breaking down of the middle wall of partition, "the redeemed unto God by his blood," out of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Rev. v. 9.) As if it had been said—"Others have been called saviours because they have rescued the body; they were temporal deliverers, they saved the Jews from the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Midianites. But this child is called a Saviour for a nobler reason. He rescues the soul—He is an eternal Deliverer." The proper Deity of Christ is written as with a sunbeam here. *He* is emphatic—"He, and no other"—"He personally, and by personal acts." Jesus saves His people from their sins: 1. By price, and thus He redeems. By the shedding of His blood we are ransomed, and by His death we live. "He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." 2. By power, and thus He renews. The peace He gives has purity with it, and purity in it. Those whom He pardons He sanctifies. He saves them from the love of sin; they not only avoid sin, but abhor it. He delivers them from the bondage of it. Sin shall not have dominion over them, for they are not under the law, but under grace. If Jesus is to save his people from their sins, how awfully deceived are those who hope to be saved in their sins! This

message from God to Joseph, according with his former confidence in the piety of Mary, might well lead him to acknowledge the hand of God, and regard the dream as a special event, arranged for relieving his mind, and for leading him in the path of duty.

<sup>22</sup> Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, <sup>23</sup> Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.—*Isa. vii. 14.*

All this includes the whole narrative (from verse 18) of the events of miraculous conception and birth. *That it might be fulfilled.* What God declares shall take place, must of necessity have a fulfillment. (See Luke xxii. 37.) Prophecies relating to Jesus were fulfilled, not only in His own acts, but in events which occurred to Him without His agency. *Spoken of the Lord by the Prophet*, rather, “Spoken by the Lord, through,” &c. Isaiah is the prophet here spoken of (vii. 14). This is the first of the many ancient prophecies which Matthew notices as fulfilled in the history of our blessed Lord. It had been pronounced about 750 years before, and yields to none, in its wondrous precision and clearness. A virgin—it should be “the virgin,” meaning that particular virgin destined to this unparalleled distinction. *And they shall call*—He shall be known and recognized—such shall be His universal appellation. *His name Emmanuel.* *Emmanu* means “with us;” *el* means “God.” What precious truths are here suggested! 1. We know, in consequence of the revelations made by Christ, that God is so with us, so near to us, that our very existence is every moment upheld by Him. 2. We know from the incarnation and doctrine of Christ that God is with us, not as individuals merely, but with our world, in the offers of His saving grace. 3. In Christ we see that God is with us in our very nature, to accomplish our redemption. 4. We are assured that, though ascended into heaven, He is still “God with us,” with us by the invisible and mighty influence which He exerts. 5. We are thus reminded that God is with us, in condescension and special grace, during the whole course of discipline to which He subjects us. Is Christ our Emmanuel? God with us? Then let us

take care that we are with Him—coming to Him habitually in acts of faith and love—walking with Him, and before Him—so shall He be to us all, and in all, the strength of our heart, and our portion forever.

<sup>24</sup> Then Joseph being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

Joseph, having fully awoke, and all his difficulties now removed, the marriage was consummated, probably immediately, or very soon after the dream. With what deep and reverential joy would this now be done on his part; and what balm would this minister to his betrothed one, who had till now lain under suspicions of all others the most trying to a chaste and holy woman—suspicions, too, arising from what, though to her an honor unparalleled, was to all around her wholly unknown!

<sup>25</sup> And knew her not till she had brought forth <sup>her</sup> first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.  
\*Exod. xiii. 2; Luke ii. 7, 21.

The virginity of Mary before the birth of Jesus is directly asserted. The words *till* and *first-born* do not necessarily imply that she had other children afterward. When we affirm a certain state of things *until* a given point, we may intend our affirmation to cover the time previous to the point, without pretending to affirm, imply, or even know what took place after that point. We have examples of this in Gen. xxviii. 15; Deut. xxxiv. 6; 1 Sam. xv. 35; 2 Sam. vi. 23. *Until*, and equivalents in other languages, affirm and deny nothing beyond the point of time which they are used to designate, but leave the result to be discovered in some other way. The Greek interpreters assert this to be the usage of the Greek word employed in this case, and refer for proof to Gen. viii. 7; Ps. cx. 1, to which others have added, Isa. xlii. 3, as quoted in Matt. xii. 20, where the meaning cannot be that after He has sent forth judgment unto victory He will begin to break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax. So too in Tim. iv. 13, Paul cannot mean to say that after he comes Timothy must cease to read, exhort, and teach. As to the word “first-born,” many affirm that it is, in the Old Testament, properly applied to the *only-born*; that is, it is applied to any child whose birth has



been preceded by no other, whether succeeded by any other or not. The Mosaic law prescribed the sanctification of the "first-born" (Ex. xii. 2), and this first-born was still so called, whether succeeded by subsequent children or not. Referring to

the question now under view, one of the ancients says, "what the virgin was afterward is of small concern to the mystery, therefore not to be inquired after." *He called* (that is Joseph) *his name* JESUS. (See on verse 21.)

1. What is said of "the Book of Generation?"
2. What is meant by the title "Jesus Christ?"
3. To whom does Matthew trace the Lord's genealogy?
4. Why does he thus trace it?
5. How is the genealogical table arranged?
6. What does *Leighton* say of the Book of the Generation? &c.
7. What is said of the omissions in verses 7 and 8?
8. What is said about "all generations," &c., v. 17?
9. What do we learn from the list of the names given?
10. What does the Evangelist proceed to show?
11. What ends could Jesus accomplish by becoming incarnate?
12. What angel appeared to Joseph?
13. What did he say to him?
14. How does Jesus save His people from their sins?
15. What is said of verses 22 and 23?
16. What course did Joseph pursue after rising from his sleep?

CHAPTER. II.

1 *The wise men out of the east are directed to Christ by a star.* 11 *They worship him, and offer their presents.* 14 *Joseph fleeth into Egypt, with Jesus and his mother.* 16 *Herod slayeth the children:* 20 *himself dieth.* 23 *Christ is brought back again into Galilee to Nazareth.*

NOW, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

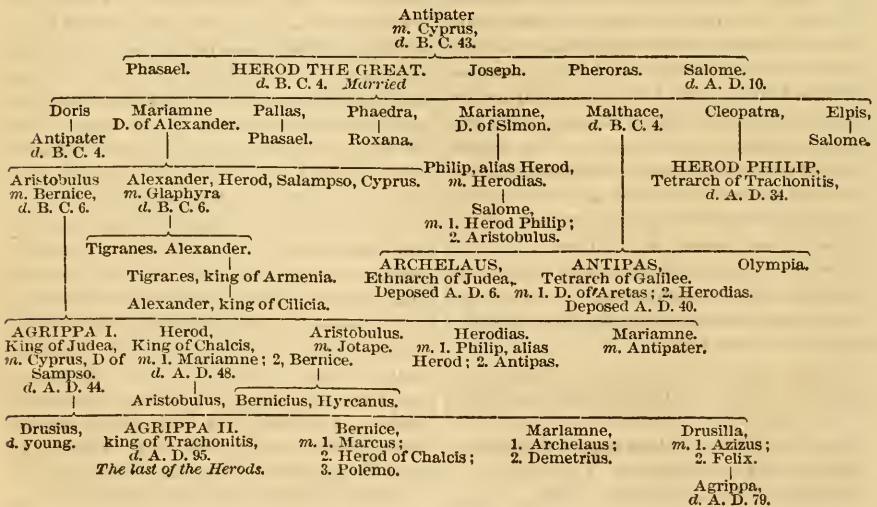
• Luke ii. 4, 6, 7. • Gen. x. 30, xxv. 6; 1 Kings iv. 30

When Jesus was born. (See on Luke ii. 8.)

*Bethlehem of Judea*—Judea was the southern of the three provinces into which Palestine was divided. The name is derived from the name of the tribe of Judah. "It em-

bodied 'the original territories of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, together with Dan and Simeon; being almost the same with the old kingdom of Judah, and about one hundred miles in length, and sixty in breadth.'" *Herod the King*. This monarch was surnamed *the great*, to distinguish him from three others of the same name, who subsequently reigned, in whole or part, over the Jewish nation. He was the second son of Antipater, who was appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Cesar, B. C. 47.

THE FAMILY OF HERODS.



*Wise men.* The word thus translated is, in the original, *magi*, a word which is, however, not Greek, but a foreign oriental term, adopted by the Evangelist and other writers in Greek, as an appellation. We have no authentic account of these wise men, but there must, of course, have been more than one. There is reason to believe that they were men of rank, wealth, and learning. *From the east.* Their country was eastward of Jerusalem, but whether it was Arabia, or Persia, or some other country which lay to the east, is not certainly known. *There came wise men.* The number of the wise men is not given. Men have shown their desire to be "wise above what is written" by affirming that there were three; that they were kings; and that their names were Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar; that Gaspar presented the gold, Melchior the frankincense, and Balthazar the myrrh. In the Greek church is the utterly baseless tradition that the magi had "a retinue of one thousand men, having left behind them on the further bank of the Euphrates an army of seven thousand." *To Jerusalem.* They knew for certain that the Messiah was now born, and that He had been born in the land of Judea, but with the particular place of His birth they were yet unacquainted, and where, as to this, were they likelier to obtain the needed information than in Jerusalem, the capital of the country? How do their spirit and conduct, in cheerfully submitting to the expense and fatigue of such a journey to do homage to Jesus, rebuke those who, living amidst Christian privileges, yet do not appreciate them, and are unwilling to make any sacrifices in order to enjoy them. It would be well for all professing Christians if they were more ready to follow these wise men's example. Where is our self-denial? What pains do we take about our souls? What diligence do we show about following Christ? What does our religion cost us? These are serious questions; they deserve serious consideration.

2. Saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen this star in the east, and are come to worship him."—Luke ii. 11. "Num. xxiv. 17; Isa. lx. 3.

*Where is he, &c.* How strong their faith! "The (one) born already," as the past participle in the Greek denotes. They assume

the fact of His nativity as certain, and merely inquire for the place, as something not revealed or ascertainable from astronomical phenomena. *Schlegel* mentions, in his *Philosophy of History*, that the Buddhist missionaries traveling to China met Chinese sages going to seek the Messiah, about the year 33, A. D. Verse 11 shows that these magi deemed this "King of the Jews" to be their king also. *For we have seen his star in the east; rather, we in the East (i. e., dwelling in the East) have seen His star. His star—His exclusively.* This star must plainly mean some new appearance in the sky, which they, whose profession (as is well known) led them peculiarly to the study of astronomy, had observed in the heavens. Any appearance of a body of light in the air is called by the Greek and Latin authors a *star*. The eminent astronomer *Kepler* has shown that in the year 747 from the building of Rome a very remarkable three-fold conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of *Pisces* occurred, first on May 20th, and again November 12th, and he was of opinion that this conjunction formed the star of the magi. During the interval of some six months, in which the planets remained very near together, there would have been time sufficient for the wise men to make their journey from Chaldea to Jerusalem, including the time necessary to make preparations for it. But why did the men associate with the appearance of a star the idea that One had been born who was destined to be King of the Jews? 1. Jews having been dispersed through eastern countries, the magi could not have failed to learn something of the expectation which they had so warmly cherished relative to the coming of a great Deliverer. 2. It is well known that the opinion had obtained great currency through a considerable part of the East, that not far from that time some one would appear among the Jews who would effect a great change in the world. *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*, Roman historians, testify this. 3. The magi may have been specially illuminated from heaven, for, after they had found the object of their search, they were warned by God in a dream concerning their return. 4. There seems to be nothing unreasona-

ble in the supposition that they were acquainted with Balaam's prophecy: *There shall come a star out of Jacob*, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. (Num. xxiv. 17.) Christ claims this very title as His own. (Rev. xxii. 16.) *To worship Him*—to indicate veneration, homage, submission, by prostration of the face to the ground. (Gen. xix. 1, xlii. 6.) The word "worship" is often used in the Old and New Testaments where real adoration is not meant. It is, however, well remarked by *Dr. Alexander*, that a mere civil homage could not well be the sole object of these magi, and would have been wholly out of place upon the part of Herod. (See verse 8.) God spoke to these wise men in the glittering alphabet with which their studies made them conversant. Happy will the time be when all business shall be regarded as a medium through which God is speaking of higher and holier interests—when the merchant shall be reminded by his calling of the pearl of great price; the farmer, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; the builder, that there is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; the minister of justice, that there is a throne of justice before which all shall appear; and when science shall show its true relation to Jesus—astronomy pointing to the Star of Bethlehem, geology to the Rock of Ages, and botany to the "Plant of Renown," "the Rose of Sharon" and the "Lily of the Valley."

3. When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Herod, now seventy years old, was troubled, as were also the inhabitants of the city, because they apprehended that in Jesus, whom they expected to come as a temporal prince, a rival had appeared, who would sooner or later take possession of the kingdom—an apprehension the more painful, because, as Josephus tells us, the Pharisees a short time before foretold that the kingdom was about to be taken from the family of Herod.

4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

<sup>1</sup>2 Chron. xxxvi. 14. <sup>2</sup>2 Chron. xxxiv. 13. <sup>3</sup>Mal. ii. 7.

The class of the *chief priests* included the high priest for the time being, together

with all who had previously filled this office. The *scribes* were at first merely transcribers of the law and synagogue-readers, afterwards interpreters of the law, both civil and religious, and so both lawyers and divines. Herod knew that the coming of Messiah was expected, but he knew not the place where He should be born, hence he convened the authorized interpreters of Scripture.

5. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6. <sup>1</sup>And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

<sup>2</sup>Mic. v. 2. <sup>3</sup>John vii. 42. <sup>4</sup>Rev. ii. 27.

*Bethlehem of Judea.* (See on verse 1.) Here was an involuntary testimony to Jesus from the highest ecclesiastical authority, which yet at length condemned Him to die. Let us beware of resting satisfied with head knowledge. It is an excellent thing when rightly used, but a man may have much of it, and yet perish everlastingly. *Written by the prophet.* (Mi. v. 2.) The slight verbal difference between the verse as given by Matthew, and as originally written by Micah, may be sufficiently explained, either by the probability that the verse was quoted from the Septuagint, or the fact that Matthew doubtless intended merely to give the idea conveyed by the prophet. *Art not the least* is put, by a common figure of speech, for *art among the greatest.* *Shall rule*, literally feed. (See Ps. xxiii. lxxx. i.) *Israel, i. e.,* Israelites, all the tribes.

The passage of prophesy in this verse is a most signal one, for the following reasons:

1. It was the uniform practice of the ancient Jews agreeing with Herod's Sanhedrim to apply it to the Messiah.
2. It brings to a *point* a whole series of converging prophecies from the Edenic prediction of the seed of the woman, through the line of Shem to that of Abraham, and that of Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, and finally to Bethlehem, the city of David.
3. This pointing to Bethlehem made more conspicuous the fact that Jesus was of the royal line of David, so completing the evidence presented in Matthew's genealogy.
4. The predicted birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, of the line of David, and so of the tribe of Judah, settles the point that the Messiah *has come.* Not only was it predicted that

Messiah should appear during the second temple (which is now no more), but the tribeship of Judah and the lineage of David are lost. All traces of the royal line disappeared at the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of their race. 5. No infidel can say that these prophecies were forged by Christians, or were made to suit the event, for the records are preserved by our opponents, the Jews. The Hebrews keep our library of proofs. Judaism furnishes the prophecy; Christianity furnishes the fulfillment, and how will infidelity explain the agreement?

7. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

Herod lost no time in his efforts to remove the cause of his alarm. His sending for the magi privately is a proof of his treachery. In his inquiries of the wise men with care as to the time of the star's beginning, we perceive his craft, and their artless, unsuspecting character.

8. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Herod did not believe the report of the wise men as true, though he considered it possible. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that he did not immediately go with them. *That I may come and worship him also.* The cunning of the bloody hypocrite! Wicked men often cloak their most atrocious designs under the pretense of zeal for religion and for the honor of God. But God can cause even the wrath of men to work out His sovereign will.

9. When they had heard the king, they departed, and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

Immediately on leaving the despot's palace, the wise men set out on their journey. The star, or meteor, which they had seen in their own land now re-appeared, and came so lowly from the skies as to move horizontally before them, until it rested and shone steadily above the very house where the child was, which probably (as is common in villages) had no house contiguous, and therefore might be easily marked by the situation of the overhanging luminous body. The magi have set an example worthy to be imitated by all the wise men of this world. Like the magi, these ought not to be ashamed

to seek Christ and to bow to Him. Genuine philosophy leads to Christ. Science should be the handmaid of religion. Learning and religion are perfectly consistent with each other, yet without the light of faith all our knowledge is fragmentary, and without the Word of God all the stars of heaven leave us in the dark. But whoever follows the light he has, however faint it may be, is brought, by God's grace, to the full knowledge of the truth. Without the Word of God and the enlightening influence of His Spirit, Christ and His kingdom cannot be found. God's word is the star that points to Christ, and if we follow it we shall infallibly come to Christ. (2 Peter i. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 17.) There is a deep significance in the homage of the Magians. For it, in fact, was but a specimen and type of that which science has been doing ever since. The mind of Christ has not only entered into the temple, and made it the house of prayer: it has entered into the temple of science, and purified the spirit of philosophy. This is its spirit now, as expounded by its chief interpreter: "Man, the interpreter of nature, knows nothing, and can do nothing, except that which nature teaches him." What is this but science bending before the Child, becoming child-like, and, instead of projecting its own fancies upon God's Word, listening reverently to hear what it has to teach him? In a similar spirit, too, spoke the greatest of philosophers, in words quoted in every child's book: "I am but a child picking up pebbles on the shore of the sea of truth."

10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

The exuberant transport they experienced at recovering sight of the star indicates that they had not left their Eastern home from curiosity, but were acting under a strong impulse, to which the mere desire of doing homage to external pomp or power could not have given birth.

11. ¶ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.—Ps. lxxii. 10; Isa. ix. 6.

*Into the house.* The reason why the parents had sought shelter in a stable existed no longer. The greater part of the people who had come to Bethlehem to be taxed

had left again, and in this way the holy family had succeeded in finding more convenient lodgings. The progressive growth from the joy of the wise men in seeing the star, to their joy in seeing the child Himself, is sweetly expressed. Joseph is not here mentioned, probably because he was only the reputed father of the child. *Flu down and worshipped him.* Bowing and prostration is the Eastern manner of doing obeisance to kings, but, clearly, the worship which these star-guided strangers came so far, inquired so eagerly, and rejoiced so earnestly to pay, was a lofty, spiritual homage. (See on ver. 2.) The gifts offered were productions of their own country. *Gold.* The first installment of what the Gentiles will give for the advancement of Christianity. *Frankincense.* A species of fragrant resin that exudes from a tree. It is a native product of Arabia Felix, and hence called *Odor Arabicus*. In the Mosaic ceremonial frankincense was used as an ingredient in the perfume or incense that was to be placed before the Lord (Ex. xxx. 34), and as an accompaniment to the meat-offering (Lev. ii. 1, 16, vi. 15, xxiv. 7; Num. v. 15). Its use in these cases arose from its fragrant odor when burnt, in which respect the incense was a symbol of the Divine name, and its diffusion an emblem of the publishing abroad of that name (Mal. i. 11; Song i. 3); and from this, as prayer is a calling on God's name, the incense came to be an emblem of prayer. (Ps. cxli. 2; Lev. i. 10; Rev. v. 8, viii. 3, 4.) In this symbolical representation the burning of the frankincense was a celebration of the holiness of Jehovah. *Myrrh.* This substance is the exudation of a little-known tree, found in Arabia, but much more extensively in Abyssinia. It formed an article of the earliest commerce, and was used for various purposes. (See Ex. xxx. 23; Ps. xlv. 8; Song of Sol. iv. 6, v. 15, 13; Mark xv. 23.) It was employed in embalming the bodies of the dead. Herodotus, speaking of the practice of embalming among the Egyptians, says: "They then fill the body with powder of pure myrrh, cassia and other perfumes, except frankincense. (See John xix. 39.) According to the opinion of some ancient fathers concerning these

gifts, the faith of the wise men must have been very great, for they represent the *incense* as offered to our Saviour as God, the *gold* to have been paid as tribute to a king, and the *myrrh* (a principal ingredient used in embalming) brought as an acknowledgment that He was to die for men. Others interpret the same gifts very differently, and take them to signify the three spiritual offerings which we must all present to heaven, through Jesus Christ—the incense to denote piety toward God, the gold charity toward our fellow-creatures, and the myrrh purity of soul and body, it being highly efficacious in preserving from corruption. We are concerned to honor Christ, as well as to be saved by Him. We must not only *seek* Him, but *serve* Him. It will be observed that Mary was not an object of worship to the magi. If she had been conceived without sin, as the Church of Rome has now decided, why should she not then have been worshiped as well as now? for she was then already the mother of the adorable King and Saviour.

12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.—<sup>2</sup>Chap. i. 20.

It would seem that they had thought of returning to Herod, but a warning from God to them, in a dream, either separately or through one of their number, determined them to choose a road which led in another direction. It is worthy of remark that everything in this wonderful visit of the wise men to the infant Saviour is related with the greatest plainness, brevity and simplicity, without any of that ostentation and parade which we so often meet with in other authors. A heathen writer would have put a long and eloquent speech into the mouth of the magi, and would have provided the parents of the infant with a suitable answer. In all the evangelical histories, indeed, there is a mild and passionless equanimity, a quiet dignity, which marks the guidance and superintendence of a Spirit truly Divine. There is not a word, not a hint of extravagance or exaggeration, or unbecoming heat and intemperance. The writers never wonder, though they have wonderful things to tell of. They never fret or rage, though they have intolerable wrongs to

set forth. All they do is to give a plain and temperate record of facts.

13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

<sup>1</sup>Ps. ciii. 20; Heb. i. 14.

The visit of the magi was followed by the flight into Egypt. Special strengthenings of faith are followed by sore trials. How easily can God defeat the plans of the wicked. (See Job v. 12, 13; Ps. ii. 4.) *The young child and his mother, not thy wife and child.* Greater regard is paid to the child than to His mother. Egypt was at this time a Roman province, and many Jews lived there. By retiring to it, they would be beyond Herod's jurisdiction, and would find sympathy from the resident Jews. The Egyptian government was tolerant toward Jews. "The paintings and sculptures of the monuments indicate a very high degree of personal safety, showing us that the people of all ranks commonly went unarmed, and without military protection." *For Herod will seek*, &c. God sees the yet unformed purpose in the heart. (Ps. cxxxix. 1.) Our Lord's early flight from a cruel enemy pointed to the prediction of Him as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." What wonderful proofs of God's watchful care over His people will be revealed in another world. (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) Greatness and riches are a perilous possession for the soul. They know not what they seek who seek to have them. They lead men into many temptations.

14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, *Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

<sup>2</sup>Hosea xi. 1.

Faith gave wings to Joseph's obedience, and instantly vanquished all his fears, teaching us, that when our direction is clear, our compliance should be speedy. In times of difficulty and danger it is neither unwarrantable nor unbecoming to preserve our lives by flight. *By night*, when least notice would be taken of the movement. Although we have so many promises of safety and deliverance, yet we must not put God upon working miracles for our preservation, when it may be obtained in the use of means. Herod died

about one year after the flight to Egypt. *That it might be fulfilled*, &c. The prophecy is quoted from Hosea, xi. 1. Abraham's descendants, when they were in Egypt, were called God's son. (Ex. iv. 22, 23.) CHRIST was the promised seed (Gal. iii. 16), in whom God's promises to Abraham had their real fulfillment. What was typically spoken of the children of Israel was therefore actually fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, who alone could properly be called God's son. As the infancy of that nation was cradled in Egypt, so was it with His infancy. In both cases God sent a Joseph "to preserve life" (Gen. xlv. 5), and in both cases "there arose up a new king" (Ex. i. 8), and in both cases "the Lord called His son" out of Egypt.

16. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. xlix. 7; 2 Kings viii. 12; Prov. xxviii. 15, 17; Isa. xxvi. 21; Hosea x. 14; Rev. xvii. 6.

Though Herod regarded himself as deceived by the magi, this was far from their disposition, yet they did indeed account the king's authority naught before God's. *Exceeding wroth.* Having played the fox before, he acts the lion now. As Pharaoh commanded that the male children should be drowned, through fear that Israel was becoming "more and mightier" than the Egyptians, so Herod slew the children of Bethlehem, from fear that Christ should become king instead of himself. *According to the time*, &c. The time indicated by the wise men was perhaps a little beyond a year: Herod, therefore, fixed two years as the limit. Bethlehem was rather an inconsiderable town in numbers. Its present population is about three hundred; if we suppose it to have been at that time one thousand, the number of male children inhumanly sacrificed was probably about fifty. This event has been regarded by infidels and sceptics as entirely improbable. It has been especially objected that the massacre has not been reported by Josephus. But Josephus, if he had ever heard of it, would not have regarded the massacre of so small a number of infants as demanding notice amid the great number of terrible crimes of which Herod had been guilty. As to the improbability that so atrocious

an act could have been ordered, it is sufficient to remark that it sinks into insignificance when considered by the side of a crime which the monster planned almost in the act of dying. Causing all the principal men of Jerusalem to be shut up in the Hippodrome, he requested his sister Salome and her husband to give orders to put them to death immediately after his decease, that he might have "the honor of a memorable mourning." His character had been so hateful to the Jews that he feared they would give him no "such mourning as men usually expect at a king's death." (*Josephus.*) The death of the infants of Bethlehem sent sorrow through the little village and its borders; the death of the infant Jesus would have made everlasting the sorrows of a world.

17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by <sup>o</sup>Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18. In <sup>r</sup>Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachael weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

<sup>o</sup>Jer. xxxi. 15. <sup>r</sup>Jer. xxxi. 15.

The Evangelist does not say "that it might be fulfilled," but "then was fulfilled." It was a fulfillment of the words, though not the event immediately predicted. *Ramah* was a village in the tribe of Benjamin, near Bethlehem, and a few miles north of Jerusalem. *Rachael*, one of Israel's wives, and mother of Joseph and Benjamin. (Gen. xxx. 22-24.) As to her death and burial, see Gen. xxxv. 16-19. As when the Jewish captives were formerly collected by Nebuzaradan on the plains of Ramah, and carried thence to Babylon, the prophet (Jer. xxxi. 15) by a bold and striking figure introduces Rachael, as rising from her grave, and deploring the sufferings of her posterity, so here the Evangelist, deeply affected in recording the tragic scenes, brings forward again the wife of the patriarch, as a distressed mother, weeping inconsolably, because of the sanguinary massacre of her children. "It is," says *Westcott*, "through the Evangelists that the Holy Spirit has afforded us a true insight into the inner meaning of the prophets, who were the *historians* of the elder dispensation, as in the Epistles he has set forth the anti-types of the ancient law. That is surely a meagre theology and unscholarly-like criticism which finds nothing more than a fanciful adaptation

in the Scriptures quoted in the opening chapter of St. Matthew."

*Because they are not*—no longer living, taken away. "This," says one, "was the scene on earth. How different were the scenes then witnessed in heaven! How many happy spirits then entered together into glory."

19. <sup>†</sup>But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20. Saying, <sup>‡</sup>Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: <sup>§</sup>for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

<sup>†</sup>Jer. xxxi. 15. <sup>‡</sup>Ex. iv. 19.

*When Herod was dead.* The rulers of millions have no power to retain life when the hour of their departure comes. The murderer of helpless infants must himself die. Christians should never be greatly moved by the persecution of man, remembering that "the triumphing of the wicked is but short." "What has become of the Pharaohs, and Neros, and Diocletians, who at one time fiercely persecuted the people of God? Where is the enmity of Charles the Ninth of France, and Bloody Mary of England? They did their utmost to cast the truth down to the ground. But the truth rose again from the earth, and still lives, and they are dead, and mouldering in the grave. Let not the heart of any believer fail. Death is a mighty leveler, and can take any mountain out of the way of Christ's Church." God seldom suffers persecutors to pass in quiet to their graves; they rarely die the common death of all men. Herod was seized with his last illness when he was sixty-nine years old, and his disease was of a most excruciating and loathsome kind. *An angel*, most probably the same that appeared on former occasions. (See Note on chap. i. 20; ii. 13.) *Saying, Arise, &c.* We are to expect that God will in some way direct His people, in perplexity, respecting the path of duty. (Prov. iii. 6.) God's promise to Joseph to bring him word (v. 13) is here fulfilled. *The land of Israel*, meaning the Holy Land at large, the particular promise being not as yet indicated. *They are dead, &c.*—a Scriptural expression which must have been familiar to Joseph. (Ex. iv. 19.) It seems that some one beside Herod sought to destroy Jesus; perhaps it was Herod's eldest son, Antipater, who was influenced by the same motive as his

father. He died a few months before Herod, but not a natural death.

21. And he arose, and took the child and its mother, and came into the land of Israel.

Joseph felt that he needed the same authority for returning to his own country as he had for quitting it. Our Lord's stay in Egypt could not have been many months in duration.

22. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.

\*Chap. iii. 13; Luke ii. 39.

Joseph heard of the reign of Archelaus after he had reached the land of Israel. Herod the Great had ten wives. Archelaus was his son by his fourth wife—Malthece, who was a Samaritan. *He was afraid, &c.* The fear of Joseph may be taken as an expression of the popular distrust of Archelaus, which was amply justified by the continued tyranny and disorder of his nine years' reign. *Notwithstanding, being warned, &c.* As this was the fourth revelation to Joseph, it is evident that a very special providence watched over the life of the Divine child. *He turned aside.* Observe how God's warrant and direction quieted Joseph's mind, resolved his doubts, removed his fears, and made him readily comply with the Divine command. *Galilee* was one of the three provinces into which Palestine was divided in the time of our Lord. Galilee was beyond the jurisdiction of Archelaus, and was at this time under the rule of Herod Antipas, who was of a more generous and humane disposition than his brother Archelaus.

23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

\*John i. 45. \*Judg. xiii. 5; 1 Sam. i. 16.

Nazareth is a town of Lower Galilee, within the territory of Zebulon. *He shall be called a Nazarene.* As the Evangelist does not intimate that any one prophet in particular had used this expression concerning the Messiah, and as Nazareth was odious to the people of Judea, so that to be a Nazarene implied reproach, he may be understood as saying that what he is about to express accorded with prophetic declarations concerning Him, such as Ps. xxii. 6,

&c., lxix. 9; Isa. lii. 53; Zech. xi. 12, 13. See Matt. xxi. 11; Acts ii. 22, iv. 10. *Prof. Day*, of Yale College, prefers the explanation that the Messiah is described, in Isa. xi. 1, as a *Netzer* (that is, a shoot, sprout, of Jesse), "the proper name of Nazareth." Thus the Messiah was represented as "a humble, despised descendant of the decayed royal family." But we prefer the former explanation. Did Jesus bear so despised a name as "a Nazarene?" Ought we to be proud when our great Lord was so humble? We are disposed to be ashamed of the plainness of our family, or circumstances, or education, and we are anxious to conceal such things from the world. This pride is very sinful, and comes to us from our first parents, who wished to be as gods. But Jesus has set His people an example of suffering contempt. What would we not give to know more of that home at Nazareth, where thirty long years of the sinless life of Jesus 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 therefore learn what this mysterious silence teaches. 1. A 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 the Christian's heart, so with the Messiah in His silent home at Nazareth. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." 2. A warning: That the kind of knowledge we most crave after is not always the kind of knowledge that is best for us. It is said of those who had a knowledge of Christ's daily life, "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. 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.



1. What is said of Bethlehem? 2. Describe Herod. 3. What of the wise men? 4. What is meant by the star they saw? 5. In what sense did they come to worship the infant Saviour? 6. Why was Herod troubled? 7. What did he do? 8. What did the chief priests and scribes say to him? 9. State the reasons why the prophecy in v. 5 is a signal one. 10. What further did Herod do? 11. What is said of the wise men? 12. Explain the gifts they presented. 13. Why did they not return to Herod? 14. What did the angel say to Joseph? 15. What course did Joseph pursue? 16. What atrocity did Herod perpetrate? 17. What occurred after Herod's death? 18. What is said about Christ dwelling in Nazareth?

### CHAPTER III.

1 *John preacheth: his office: life, and baptism. 7 He reprehendeth the Pharisees; 13 and baptizeth Christ in Jordan.*

**I**N those days came <sup>John</sup> the Baptist, preaching <sup>in</sup> the wilderness of Judea,  
<sup>a</sup>Mark i. 4, 15; Luke iii. 2, 3; John i. 28. <sup>b</sup>Josh. xiv. 10.

*In those days*—while Jesus was dwelling at Nazareth, where the last chapter left Him. Yet between the two chapters an interval of nearly thirty years has transpired. How our Lord spent His time, during His residence at Nazareth, we are not, except in general, informed. (See Luke ii. 41–52; Matt. ii. 23, xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3.) The Evangelists in their manner of writing seemed to have complied with the Saviour's intention in His manner of living. He would not have lived so long in secret if He had desired to be known openly. It was suitable that He should know, by experience, how to sympathize with human beings in the ordinary circumstances of life, as well as with respect to their eternal interests. (Heb. ii. 11, 14, 17, 18.) Those who are preparing for the work of the ministry ought not to push themselves forward with undue haste to that holy office.

*Came.* (See chap. xvii. 10–13, where reference is had to the prophecy, Matt. iv. 5.) The name *John* signifies “the gift or mercy of the Lord.” He was the son of Zacharias, the aged priest, and Elizabeth, and was born about six months before Christ. (See Luke i. 5–25, 57–80.) Some maintain that John was called *the Baptist*, or baptizer, to distinguish him from John the Evangelist; others, because he admitted the Jews into the number of his disciples by the external rite of baptism; others still, because he was the *first baptizer*. *Preaching, i. e.*, proclaiming, or heralding, in a loud voice. *In the wilderness of Judea*, so called because it commenced in the territory of Judea. From Tekoah, six miles

south of Bethlehem, it extended to the east as far as the Persian Gulf, and very far to the northward along the river Euphrates. The term “wilderness,” in Scripture, is applied to a district which was not regularly cultivated and inhabited, but was used for pasturage. It is God's prerogative to send forth the preachers of the Gospel when, where, and to what people He pleases, and none must refuse to go where he is directed.

<sup>2</sup>. And saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.—Dan. ii. 44; chap. iv. 17, and x. 7.

The Jews had at this time become exceedingly wicked. This is the testimony of their own historian, Josephus. John, therefore, as it had been predicted he should (Mal. iv. 5, 6), called upon them to *repent*. This word signifies that true reformation of heart and life which would be adapted to the design of the Saviour's coming, and be a suitable preparation for it. Though John did not say, “Repent and believe the Gospel,” which our Saviour did (chap. iv. 17), yet he preached the Gospel (Mark i. 2; John i. 7), for his office, chiefly, was to make Christ known, who, when He should come, was to be the great preacher of the Gospel. A state of penitence is but a preparatory state, from which we must pass into a higher. We must, by faith, “Behold the Lamb of God.” True repentance is a change of mind and heart. A man who really repents feels grieved because he has offended God, and he longs and strives to serve Him better in time to come. *For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* This sublime phrase, used in none of the other Gospels, but occurring in this peculiarly Jewish Gospel nearly thirty times, was fitted at once both to meet the national expectations and to turn them into the right channel. A kingdom for which *repentance* was the proper preparation,

behooved to be essentially *spiritual*. The phrase indicated the commencement of the Messianic or Gospel dispensation. As Christ is the King, so His Gospel is a law, and His dispensation is a kingdom. This kingdom was then *at hand*, the king was about to appear, to collect followers, finish His work, ascend His throne, abrogate the legal dispensation, terminate the national covenant of Israel, admit the Gentiles into the Church, and introduce the dispensation of Christianity.

3. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*"

<sup>a</sup>Isa. xl. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4; John i. 33. <sup>e</sup>Luke i. 76.

*Esaias*, the Greek method of expressing the name of *Isaiiah*. *For this is he*, &c. The quotation, which is from Isa. xl. 3, is made by the Evangelist, and not by the Baptist. In its primary historical application the passage contains a summons to prepare the way of Jehovah, who was about to bring back His people from exile. The application of it by the Evangelist shows that, in his mind, the advent of Christ was that of Jehovah Himself, and the true deliverance of God's children from bondage. John was a *voice*, that conveys the mind of the speaker, and then vanishes: he declared the mind of God concerning His Son, and then ended his ministry. The preacher is only the voice of Jesus Christ, as it were, a voice not to be seen, but only to be heard. *Prepare ye the way*, &c., an allusion to the practice of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition, sent harbingers before them, to call upon the people, along the proposed route, to prepare the way before them, open the passes, level the ways, and remove all impediments. The way of the Lord is prepared, and His paths made straight, when everything that opposes itself to the admission of Divine truth, such as prejudice, blindness, pride, obstinacy, self-conceit, vanity, worldliness, sensuality, and vain philosophy.

4. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was <sup>b</sup>locusts and <sup>c</sup>wild honey.

<sup>d</sup>Mark i. 6. <sup>e</sup>2 Kings i. 8; Zech. xiii. 4. <sup>f</sup>Lev. xi. 22. <sup>g</sup>1 Sam. xiv. 25, 26.

*The same John*—a remarkable personal

description. *Raiment of camel's hair*, a coarse kind of cloth, wrought of the long and stiff bristles of the camel. Such a garment was worn by Elijah. (2 Kings i. 8. See also Zech. xiii. 4.) *Leathern girdle*, a strap of untanned hide, fastened round the body with clasps. Elijah also wore such a girdle. (2 Kings i. 8.) A girdle was an important part of dress in the east, to remedy the inconvenience from the loose nature of the principal garments worn. *His meat*, &c. Locusts prevail in Arabia, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. "Their numbers are so incredible that rivers have been blocked and many square miles covered by them, the stench of their decaying bodies infecting the air for hundreds of miles." Armies have been stopped in their course by locusts. Arabs say that it is written "in good Arabic on their wings that they are God's avengers." It was formerly asserted by some that the locusts which John ate were not insects, but the long, sweet pods of the locust tree, "*St. John's Bread*." But the Mosaic law (Lev. 11. 22) permitted locusts as an article of food. They are used for food at the present time, "the legs and wings being pulled off, the bodies fried in oil, and are considered a delicacy; they are sometimes dried in the sun, pounded up, and used as a flour for making bread. In many towns in Arabia there are shops where locusts are sold by measure." John's drink is known from Luke i. 15. *Wild honey*, most probably the honey deposited by bees in the clefts of rocks and in the hollow of trees. (See Ps. lxxxii. 18; Deut. xxxii. 13; Judg. xiv. 8; 1 Sam. xiv. 25-27.) The mortified spirit and conduct of John were peculiarly suited to that severe ministry of the law, and work of humbling reformation, by which he was to prepare the Jews for receiving the expected Messiah. An exterior garb of poverty may be consistent with rare excellence in the sight of God. Ministers of the Gospel are not to affect gaiety in apparel, or delicacy in diet; but having the necessary comforts and conveniences of life, to be therewith content.

5. <sup>h</sup>Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,

<sup>i</sup>Mark i. 5; Luke iii. 7.

Never was preacher, for the time, more

successful than was John. At his voice from the wilderness the heart of the whole nation was stirred. The news of his appearing, preaching, and baptism, spread quickly through the land, and from every quarter—from the metropolitan centre to the extremities of the Jordan province, the cry of this great preacher of repentance and herald of the approaching Messiah brought trooping penitents and eager expectants of all ranks and sects.

6. <sup>1</sup>And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.—<sup>1</sup>Acts xix. 4, 18.

John baptized all his disciples, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, who had been baptized as proselytes to the religion of the Jews, and without distinction of previous character. *Jordan*, the chief river of Palestine, running from north to south, and dividing the Holy Land into two parts, of which the larger and more important lay on the west. *Confessing their sins*. Not that every one confessed his individual sins, but that they confessed publicly and fully their guilt before God. The confession seems to have been similar to those recorded in Ezra ix, Nehemiah ix, and Daniel ix. There is no doubt that John preached faith in the coming Messiah, as revealed in prophecy (see v. 11), yet the prerequisite for this baptism was the confession of sin and its renunciation. His doctrine of repentance was not that which terminates in mere emotion and external humiliation, it was spiritual and humbling. His baptism, which, like his ministry, was a transition-process, or connecting link between the Old and New Dispensations, was an appropriation and concentration into a single rite of all the lustrations and washings of the Old Testament dispensation, and thereby became the emblem of the Holy Spirit; of regeneration.

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, <sup>10</sup>O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

<sup>10</sup>Chap. xii. 34, xxiii. 33; Lev. iii. 7, 8, 9. <sup>11</sup>Rom. v. 9; 1 Thes. i. 10.

The *Pharisees* were the most celebrated of all the Jewish sects. As a class their religious profession was vain and hollow, and many of them indulged themselves in cruelty, dishonesty and oppression, though, on the other hand, there appear to have

been among them individuals of probity, and even of genuine piety. The *Sadducees*. This sect took its rise about two or three hundred years before the birth of Christ. It derived its name from Zadoc, or Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus. It is very strange that the Sadducees presented themselves also as candidates for baptism; they did so, undoubtedly, in order to increase their popularity. Josephus says that they often followed the principles of the Pharisees against their own convictions, in order to rival them in popularity. *Generation of vipers*. The Baptist did not preach elegant sermons, to please his hearers; he spoke plainly, faithfully. This phrase denotes persons at once deceitful and malicious. (Isa. xiv. 29, lix. 5; Ps. lviii. 5; see on Luke iii. 7.) The expression would convey to an Israelite the idea of representatives of pernicious doctrines and principles. To treat a sinner harshly in order to humble him is not to insult him. *Who hath warned you*—"given you the hint," as the idea is—to flee from the wrath to come? This refers to God's punitive justice, His righteous displeasure against sin. (Rom. i. 8; Eph. ii. 3.) This wrath is called *coming* wrath, for, though as a merited sentence it lies on the sinner already, not until the judgment of the great day will he experience its effects without mixture and without hope. (See 1 Thes. i. 10.) These were stern words to address to "the most straitest sect" of the Jewish religion (Acts xxvi. 5), but our Saviour employed terms of even greater severity toward them. (Chap. xxiii. 13-33.) Doubtless among their number were *some* sincere persons, but, as a body, they must have been proud, uncharitable and self-righteous, of a character wholly unlike that which God approves.

8. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance:

Dangerous as was their condition, yet was it not desperate; hence, after the sharp reproof given, this seasonable exhortation was added. *Fruits*—implying abundance—*meet for repentance*—suitable, proper, consistent with repentance. A profession of repentance, unless accompanied by a reformation of life, is utterly valueless. (Chap. vii. 20.) God requires of us real works, and such as are (in some measure) proportioned to our sins. (See

Acts xxvi. 20.) Paul was far enough from teaching that works are a ground of justification. But John, standing in the twilight of Christianity, and Paul, standing in the light of its full-orbed splendor, alike taught the necessity of evincing the genuineness of our repentance by bringing forth the fruits of holiness.

9. And think 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."  
John viii. 33, 39; Acts xiii. 26; Rom. iv. 1, 4, 6.

"Do not comfort yourselves by saying to one another, and in your hearts, that your descent from Abraham will excuse you from the duty of repentance, for God is able, if necessary, *out of these stones* (pointing probably to the stones of the Jordan), the most unlikely material, to create a people like to Abraham in faith and obedience." (Comp. Rom. iv. 9, 6, 7; Gal. iv.; John viii. 39, 40.) The piety of our ancestors, or of our relatives, will not avail for our salvation. Men, and especially the self-righteous, rake together every pretext to claim God as theirs, without repentance. Ministers of Christ should endeavor to drive hypocrites and self-deceived persons from their vain confidence.

10. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.  
Chap. vii. 19; Luke xlii. 7, 9; John xv. 6.

*The axe is laid, &c.* (See on Luke iii. 9.) The excision hinted at in the preceding verse, which was to cut off the rebellious Jews from the promises and privileges granted to the true seed of Abraham, is here represented as about to take place. The representation is that of a woodman, who, before he begins to fell a tree, lays the sharp edge of his axe to the place where he means to give his first blow, giving warning, as it were, that he is about to strike. *The axe* is here a figure for Divine judgment. *At the root*, expressing utter destruction. It was not to be a simply organic destruction, but individual also. *Therefore*—an inference from what precedes. *Every tree*—every impenitent individual. The punishment will equally descend on all. *Which bringeth not forth good fruit*—that is, right or acceptable to God, and salutary, useful to the doer and to others. The sin here specified is the sin of *omission*. The neglects of duty are

as dangerous and destructive as the positive acts of sin. *Is hewn down*, means strictly *cut out*, and is so translated in Rom. ii. 24. It here denotes the complete excision of the tree. *And cast into the fire*—a description of the element made use of to consume the tree, and representing, as a figure, the wrath of God, already mentioned in v. 7, or its ruinous effect upon the unforgiven sinner. (Comp. chap. xxv. 46; Heb. vi. 8, xii. 29.) It is not unsuitable for ministers of the Gospel to press repentance and holiness of life upon their hearers from arguments of terror.

11. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Mark i. 8; Luke iii. 16; John i. 15, 26, 33; Acts i. 5, and xi. 16, and xix. 24. \*Isa. iv. 4, and xlii. 3; Mal. iii. 2; Acts ii. 2, 3, 4; 1 Cor. xii. 13.

John depreciates not so much his baptism as himself. He teaches that his was a symbolical and temporary mission as the forerunner, to prepare for the higher mission of the Messiah. (See on Luke iii. 16.) *Unto repentance, i. e.*, as a solemn ratifying profession of having exercised repentance, and of the obligation to repentance. *He that cometh after me*, immediately following me: this expression would be understood as referring to the Messiah. *Is mightier than I*, more exalted in all that pertains to personal worth or official dignity, authority and power. *Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear*. To unloose a person's sandals and carry them after him was considered by the Jews, Greeks, and Romans, the most servile and degrading of all menial employments; yet John regarded the performance of this service for Christ as an honor of which he was utterly unworthy. The coming One was the King; he himself was nothing more than a servant. Two things are evident: 1. John did not seek for honor, emolument, or fame, nor was he ambitious of being at the head of a sect. 2. He must have considered Christ as the Lord God who was to come as a shepherd with a strong hand, whose reward was with Him and His work before Him. On no other supposition can we rationally account for the manner in which he here speaks of Christ.

*He shall baptize you*—abundantly impart (Titus iii. 6; Acts ii. 3, 4, 17, and x. 44), and

shall thereby show Himself the *mightier*. With the *Holy Ghost*, with the effusions of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. xii. 13.) The term *Holy Spirit* is preferable to the term *Holy Ghost*, as the word *ghost* is attended with unpleasant associations in many minds. *And with fire*. The word "with" is not in the original. The reference is to the fiery character of the Spirit's operations upon the souls of our Lord's disciples—searching, dross-consuming, cleansing, refining, sublimating. The descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, in the form of fiery tongues lighting on the Apostles, with the effects produced on their minds and by their ministry, was a remarkable fulfillment of this prediction. We need to be sent direct to Christ. We must not rest in our union with the church, regular use of the sacraments, or diligent attendance on the preached Word. Forgiveness of sin is not the only thing necessary to salvation; we need also the baptizing of our hearts by the Holy Spirit. There must not only be the work of Christ *for* us, but the work of the Holy Spirit *in* us.

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

\*Mat. iii. 3. \*Mat. iv. 1; chap. xiii. 30.

The same truth is here enforced as in v. 10, though in another aspect. (See on Luke iii. 17.) The fruitless tree among fruitful ones is recognized at once, and the distinction easily perceived. Not so with the confused heap of grain and chaff which lies together on the farmer's thrashing-floor. But though the converted and unconverted are mingled in the visible church, sinners will not be overlooked in the crowd, under the Messiah's discriminating and adjudging process. *Whose* and *his*, thrice used in this verse with emphasis, show the power of Christ. The fan was a winnowing shovel, with which the grain, as it came from the thrashing floor, was thrown up against the wind, in order that the chaff might be blown aside, and the wheat cleansed. *Fan*. The representations of the Scriptures (Isa. xxx. 24; Jer. iv. 11) relative to the ancient process of separating the chaff from the wheat have been strikingly confirmed by discoveries in Egypt. Monuments and tombs have revealed the entire process of plowing,

sowing, reaping, thrashing, and winnowing. The grain was tossed up in the wind with shovels or with fans—"their precise difference is very doubtful." By the *fan* is meant the Gospel. It is calculated to separate the good from the evil by the love to Christ which it excites, and the sacrifices it demands. It will separate the chaff from the wheat in the day of judgment, it being the law by which all shall be judged, and declared worthy or unworthy of admission into eternal life. (See John xii. 48; 2 Thess. i. 8-10.) (Is) *in his hand*, in readiness for use. *Thoroughly purge his floor*; not destroy, but cleanse, or clear off, his thrashing-floor, *i. e.*, his visible Church. The thrashing-floor was in some elevated part of the field. It was of a circular form, thirty or forty paces in diameter, having the ground beaten down and leveled.

*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 thrashing. *His wheat*, that belonging to Him, which implies its value—true and penitent believers, the precious, pure produce of God's husbandry. *Into the garner*, literally, a *place of laying by or up*, a granary, or store-house, called, in chap. xiii. 30, 43, "the kingdom of their Father." The 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. *Chaff*—this is held of no account, though sometimes not unlike wheat. *Burn up with unquenchable fire*—an eternal fire. Singular is the strength of this apparent contradiction of figures: to be *burnt up*, with a *fire that is unquenchable*, the one expressing the utter *destruction* of all that constitutes one's true life; the other, the *continued consciousness of existence* in that awful condition. 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. (See Mark i. 7, 8; ix. 43, 45; Luke, iii. 9, 16, 17.) We need to be reminded that there is a hell as well as a heaven, and a final separation coming. We are fearfully apt to forget this. We talk of the love and mercy of God, and we do not remember sufficiently His justice and holiness. Terrible, but inevitable separation!

13. ¶ "Then cometh Jesus vrom Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.  
 vMark i. 9; Luke iii. 21. vChap. ii. 22.

*Then cometh Jesus, &c.* (See on Luke iii. 21.) The baptism of Christ was His first step, when He entered on His public ministry. The precise spot on the banks of the Jordan where John was now occupied is not stated. Jesus comes to His servant—the greater comes meekly to the less. His design, no doubt, was to put honor upon the ministry of John. *To be baptized of him.* Being free from sin, Jesus could not repent, and He needed no forgiveness, regeneration or newness of life, yet, as He took upon Him our nature, and was made sin for us, being made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He condescended to observe all the rites and ceremonies imposed by the law upon those whom He came to redeem; besides, as He was now to be inaugurated to His priestly office, He received the rite of baptism as a solemn introduction to His most sacred work and offices, of which John's testimony, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the voice from heaven, were so many notifications. (See Ex. xxix. 1–37.) Jesus clothes Himself with us and our sins, that He may clothe us with Himself and His righteousness.

14. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

How holy and lovely is that contest which arises, on either side, from nothing but humility! Though John had probably seen Jesus but little, yet often enough, as His life could not have been altogether retired, to have awakened within him the presentiment which now deepened to conviction, that He was the Messiah. As John saw Him approaching, in all gentleness and humility, to the baptism of repentance, he saw shining through this

deep humility the high majesty of the Holy One; and that he had an inward token or discernment of this, constituted his own dignity. The Baptist's reason, then, for seeking to dissuade Christ from receiving baptism was three-fold: 1. He knew that He needed it not, as he had a prophetic or Divine certitude concerning the Messiahship of Jesus. 2. He had a deep consciousness of his own unworthiness, and that of any mortal man, to administer this ordinance to the Saviour. 3. He feared that the people, seeing Christ baptized, should apprehend Him to be a sinner, needing the baptism of repentance as well as themselves.

15. And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

*Suffer it to be so now.* Gently the Baptist declines; gently the Saviour insists. He could command; He only requests. *Thus it becometh us, &c.* 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. (See Notes on v. 13.) In acts of deepest humility the Son of God watches over the right of His own majesty. (John xiii. 7, &c., xiv. 30, xviii. 5, xx. 36.) The Saviour followed the custom of the priests at their induction to their office. (Ex. xxix. 4.) He is an example of ready obedience to the Divine will. "Whatever," says an eminent scholar, "may be the full depth of meaning in this language of our Lord, so much as this at least we are to understand by it, that had He omitted this act of obedience, He would have left incomplete that perfect righteousness which in our nature He has wrought out. If aught that it became Him to fulfill had been left unfulfilled, something essential would have been wanting." *Then he suffered him*—with true humility, yielding to higher authority than his own impressions of propriety. We should cherish an humble reverence for Divine ordinances, looking on them as *God's*. "What," says one, "though he that teaches be less knowing and less spiritual than thou that hearest? one, that might rather learn of *thee*? Yet the appointment of God obliges thee to

attend to His ministry as humbly, and with as much regard, as if He were an angel."

16. \*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.

\*Mark i. 10. †Isa. xl. 2, and xlii. 1; Luke iii. 22; John, i. 32, 33.

*Straightway*—immediately. *Out of the water.* Rev. Dr. Whedon, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, says: "How He was baptized is not said. His coming out of the water aids us not in guessing how, for the preposition properly signifies *from*. Nor, if Jesus waded into and out of the water, would it in the least aid the matter. Thousands in ancient and modern times have been baptized by affusion, as they are represented in ancient pictures, standing or kneeling in the bed of a stream. But, at any rate, the mode of this baptism was such as to make it the symbol and picture of the spiritual baptism which forthwith descended upon Him in dove-like form." Rev. J. J. Owen, D. D., of the Presbyterian Church, remarks: "Out of the water, more literally, *away from the water, i. e.,* from the margin or bank, on which He stood while receiving the rite, for had the idea out of the water been intended, the preposition *ek*, instead of *apo*, would have been used. Much less admissible is the notion that complete immersion is here implied, for what necessity in that case for the word *immediately*, as though the person baptized either could or would desire to remain under or in water any length of time." On the contrary, the Rev. Henry J. Ripley, of the Baptist Church, observes: "The preposition here translated *out of* has the more general signification of the word *from*, and would be suitable, whether the sacred writer meant to say that Jesus came out from the water, that is, from within the river to the shore; or, that he came from the water, that is, retired from the bank of the river to another place. This preposition, then, in itself furnishes no decision in respect to the manner of the ordinance. But that the rendering *out of* is correct, appears from the facts, that persons to be baptized went to a *river*; that the proper meaning of the word *baptize* is to *immerse*; and that in Acts viii. 39 the preposition translated *out of* is, in the original, the very one which would be selected to ex-

press the coming up out of the water, after a person had been baptized. In the case of Jesus, as in the instance recorded in Acts viii. 39, it was after He had been baptized that He came up out of, or from, the water."

We cannot but think that on all sides too much importance is attached to the mere mode of baptism. If it was essential to the validity of the ordinance, would it not have been more distinctly revealed? At all events, the diversity of opinion in regard to it is not likely soon to cease.

And lo! a strange and great event. *The heavens were opened unto him, 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 had 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. This was it shown that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened unto 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.

And he saw; Jesus. (Mark i. 10.) John, also. (John i. 32.) Probably others who were present participated in the vision. The conjunction of the voice (which those present doubtless heard) and the appearance, seems, indeed, to indicate that both were intended to be witnessed by all present. *The Spirit of God descending like a dove.* A visible form is evidently intended. "In a bodily shape like a dove" (Luke iii. 22); that is, the Spirit invested itself with a dove form. Here we have 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 eye 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 Spirit descended upon

Christ as the promised gift of His great office. (Isa. lxi. 1.) The form of a dove may have been assumed because that bird is the emblem of meekness, gentleness, innocence, attributes which were so conspicuous in our Divine Master. This form would also 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.* Some suppose that in the selection of this form there was a reference to the dove's hovering and brooding motion, used in Gen. i. 2, according to an ancient Jewish exposition, to describe the generative or productive agency of the Divine Spirit in the first creation. Others suppose there was a reference to the sacrificial use of this bird, as prescribed or permitted by the ritual in certain cases. (Gen. xv. 9; Lev. xiv. 22; xxi. 6; Luke ii. 24.) *And lighting upon Him.* It is said in John i. 32, "abode upon Him." We must not suppose that our Lord at this particular time first received the grace of the Holy Ghost—the Spirit dwelt in Jesus "without measure" from the very time of His Incarnation.

17. *And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

\*John xii. 28. †Ps. ii. 7; Isa. xlii. 1; chap. xii. 8, xvii. 5; Matt. i. 22; Luke ix. 35; Eph. i. 6; Col. i. 13; 2 Peter i. 17.

*A voice from heaven*, not visionary or imaginary, but a literal and real sound, corresponding to the bodily appearance by which it was preceded. We read of no voice from heaven before this, except at the giving of the law on Sinai. *This is my beloved Son.* We have here—1. *The nearness of Christ's relation.* He is the Father's Son, in respect of His eternal generation, in respect of His miraculous conception, and by particular designation to hold the office of mediator. The words *My Son* are applied to the Messiah in the promise made to David (2 Sam. vii. 14), and in his own prophetic Psalm, founded on it. (Ps. ii. 7.) Hence the *Son of God* became one of His standing designations. (Matt. iv. 3, 6, viii. 29, xiv. 33, xxvi. 63, xxvii. 40, 54.) The filial relation thus ascribed to the Messiah, far from excluding, presupposes His eternal Sonship. 2. *The endearedness of Christ's person*—"be-

loved Son." 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. *Dr. Alexander*, in reference to this clause, and that immediately preceding it, says: "There is no tautology in these two clauses, but the first describes our Lord as the beloved Son of God from all eternity, the second as the object of His infinite complacency and approbation as the Son of man, the Mediator, the Messiah. In this voluntarily-assumed or adopted character the Son of God was recognized and set forth at His baptism." (Isa. xlii. 1.) The preposition "in" indicates especially the object of the Father's good pleasure, and all persons and all things in the Son. The verb meaning to be *well pleased* is 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. 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. They are, as our persons and services only can be, "accepted in the Beloved." In the baptism of our Lord the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is demonstrated. *Three distinct persons* are here represented: God the Holy Ghost "in a bodily shape like a dove," God the Son ascending from the waters of Jordan, 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.



1. What "days" are meant? 2. What is said of John the Baptist? 3. What of the wilderness of Judea? 4. What did John preach? 5. What is repentance? 6. What is said of "the kingdom of heaven?" 7. Which prophecy is referred to in verse 3? Explain it. 8. Describe John's raiment and food. Was he successful as a preacher? 9. What was the prerequisite for his baptism? 10. What was John's baptism? 11. What did he say to the Pharisees? 12. What did he say to the Pharisees? 13. Explain "the wrath to come." 14. What are the fruits mentioned in verse 8? 15. Explain the caution in verse 9. 16. What representation is made in verse 10? 17. What testimony does John bear to Christ? 18. What is meant by being baptized with the Holy Ghost? 19. What is meant by the "fan" in Christ's hand? 20. Explain "wheat" and "chaff;" also "unquenchable fire." 21. What did Jesus come to John for? 22. Why did John forbid Him to be baptized? 23. What is the import of Christ's answer? 24. What followed the baptism of Christ? 25. What is said of the Spirit? 26. What of the voice? 27. Explain "My beloved Son," &c.

### CHAPTER IV.

<sup>1</sup> Christ fasteth, and is tempted. <sup>11</sup> The angels minister unto him. <sup>13</sup> He dwelleth in Capernaum, <sup>17</sup> beginneth to preach, <sup>18</sup> calleth Peter, and Andrew, <sup>21</sup> James, and John, <sup>23</sup> and healeth all the diseased.

**T**HEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

<sup>a</sup>Mark i. 12, &c.; Luke iv. 1, &c. <sup>b</sup>See 1 Kings xviii. 12; Ez. iii. 14, viii. 3, and xi. 1, 24, and xl. 2 and xlii. 5; Acts viii. 39.

The deeply mysterious passage of our Lord's history, with which this chapter commences, is like the mystery of His holy incarnation, far beyond our understanding. It is full of truths only partially revealed, and can never be understood by us more than in part. Still, although like many other parts of Scripture, it draws the veil where the eye of a vain curiosity would pry too far, it leaves all that open to our contemplation from which useful lessons of admonition and comfort may be drawn, and the spiritual profit to be derived from it will be in proportion to the child-like, humble, teachable spirit with which it is approached and regarded. The manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh being the wonder of all wonders, it was to be looked for that this should be surrounded by a group of secondary wonders in His life. What would indeed be startling and perplexing would be the absence of every thing supernatural from such a life—the fact that He whose name is "wonderful" (Isa. ix. 6) should never, either by what He did, or what was done in respect of Him, have testified that there was any difference between Himself and the other children of men. (See Heb. iv. 15, and ii. 18.)

*Then.* This word not merely designates succession of time; it denotes rather the Divine order in which the events of the

Saviour's life followed one another "Then," immediately after our Lord's baptism (Mark i. 12), as if to remind us that this life is from the very first a scene of trial, and to teach us that we may expect to be assailed by Satan when we have received the greatest enlargements from heaven, either at the sacrament or in prayer, or in any other way. "Then," immediately before He entered on His public ministry, thus showing that Satan desired to suppress the Gospel in the beginning, and that we may expect to be assailed by him when we purpose honoring God in any particular undertaking or course, and are nearest the performance. *Led up of the Spirit*, undoubtedly the Spirit of God. (See Rom. i. 4; Heb. ix. 14.) The Spirit *impelled* Jesus to go where inclination would not have induced Him; but, at the same time, He was led up of His own free will. As to tempting, in the sense of alluring to sin, God is incapable of it. (James i. 13.) In the sense, however, of trying and displaying character, He, as the judge of the earth, is and must be, whilst this life of probation lasts, pledged to continue the application of the probe and the crucible to human character. So he tried Abraham's faith by asking the sacrifice of Isaac; and Israel in the wilderness, to prove them, and to know what was in their hearts. We should not court danger. Let us do all we can in order that the trial may be spared us, and if this cannot be, then we shall meet it with the freedom which springs from a good conscience, and with the strength which accompanies humility, under the sustaining assurance that the devil can never tempt us but by the leave of our Heavenly

Father, and never beyond the extent which He permits. (See Job ii.)

*Into the Wilderness.* Tradition finds this wilderness in the desolate region east of Jerusalem, overlooking the valley of the Jordan. The mountain which the same tradition makes the immediate scene of the "temptation" that ensued, is from this tradition called *Quarantania*. A modern traveler thus describes the scene on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho: "After pursuing our way for an hour or two down the rugged ravine which forms the road, we turned to the left, and ascended into the desolate and blackened mountains of the 'Wilderness of Judea,' the scene of John the Baptist's ministration and of our Lord's temptation. Of all places in the world, it is naturally fittest for the centre and kingdom of Satan the destroyer; for, as Maundrell says, 'it is a most miserable, dry, barren place, consisting of high, rocky mountains, so torn and disordered as if the earth had suffered some great convulsion, in which its very bowels had been turned outward.' This fearful wilderness, not ten miles east of Jerusalem, has always been the abode of violence and misery. The very road on which we passed was the scene of our Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan. About half way between Jerusalem and Jericho we passed the crumbling walls of a large khan, with immense cisterns. Following the rugged road, often through avenues cut in the rock, we came, by two o'clock, to the eastern edge of the wilderness which overlooks the plain of Jericho, clad in deep green verdure, caused by the fertilizing streams of the Fountain of Elisha. Beyond it deep in the valley, and as yet invisible, flowed the Jordan, while the view beyond was closed by the dark masses of the mountains of Moab, inviting the eye of the pilgrim to select *Nebo* and *Pisgah*. I paused on the brow of the mountain, near the well-preserved remains of a Roman aqueduct, which once supplied water to the city of Jericho, and gazed upon this wide and gloomy panorama encircling the rich green plain which lay spread out far away below me. Immediately around was the dreary wilderness already described; to the right, in their deep, sunken bed, lay

the still waters of the Dead Sea; far to the left, the mountains of the wilderness projected into the Jordan, and closed the plain to the north. In that direction, just above the Fountain of Elisha, rose above the rest the dark, thunder-seathed head of Mount *Quarantania*, which tradition assigns as an 'exceeding high mountain,' from which Satan showed our Lord 'all the kingdoms of this world.' Its summit seems inaccessible, yet a little chapel is perched upon it, and its side next the Jordan is cut into caverns and chambers, in which we saw at night the flitting taper of the hermit, or of the pilgrim doing penance during Lent."

Notice the evident relation, partly of coincidence and partly of contrast, between the temptation of the first Adam and that of the second, one of which is placed at the beginning of the Old Testament, and the other at the opening of the New. Adam was tempted in Eden ("a place of delights"), Jesus, in the wilderness. Adam, amidst the abundance of all things; Jesus, in want and in hunger. Adam, through the senses, and by the allurements of self-exaltation, and covetousness of gifts which he did not possess. Christ, to satisfy His hunger by a miracle, to display His Divine nature, by suspending the laws which govern our state, to which He had made Himself subject, and to forsake His Father for the offer of earthly greatness. Adam was tempted once and fell. Jesus was tempted three times, we should rather say, for forty days, and He resisted. We may be tempted in all places. We may escape the company of our fellow-men, but how will we escape Satan, and our own heart? Solitude is, perhaps, the fittest scene for temptation.

*To be tempted of the devil*—the diabolus or accuser. (Job i.; Rev. xii. 10.) The allusions to his fall from a state of purity are numerous and pointed. (See John viii. 44; Jude 6; 2 Peter ii. 4.) In the Old Testament he is called *Satan*. (Job i. 6-12.) The devil is not "a symbolical person," or "the principle of evil personified," but a being, active; and malicious being. He is called by personal names, such as "Belial," "tempter," "adversary," "deceiver," "liar," &c. We have no more

right to reduce Satan to figure than we have Christ, nay, God Himself. If there are good bodiless spirits, there may be bad. It is no more contrary to the nature of God's government that there should be a Satan than that there should be a Nimrod, a Nero, a Tamerlane, or a Mohammed. The primary signification of the word "tempt," is to *make trial of* one, to *test his principles*; the secondary sense, to *tempt one to commit sin*. Christ was God, and at the same time as truly man, of a human body and a reasonable soul. These two natures, profoundly mysterious though it be to us, were joined in the unity of one person, and constituted the one Christ. But the natures of Christ are not to be confounded; they are distinct, though His person is one. The attack of the devil was made upon the human soul, upon Christ in His character of Messiah, or the "servant" of God, an office which He designed to assume. That Jesus was not tempted by any inward temptation, by any, even the remotest solicitation or tendency to evil from the inner man, is evident from His own declaration (John xiv. 30), and from the facts that He had just been pronounced "full of the Holy Ghost" (Luke iv. 1), as well as that it is said (Heb. iv. 15), that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, *yet without sin*," which could not have been, if there had been anything in Him which more or less responded to the suggestions of the tempter, inasmuch as sin moves in the region of desires quite as really as in that of external acts. At the same time we are to believe that Jesus was truly and really tempted. Such things were presented to Him as were adapted to induce Him to sin, and as in any other case might have captivated the mind, and eternally ruined the soul of the tempted. This much is certain, that "He suffered being tempted." (Heb. ii. 18.) He had, by a mystery we cannot penetrate, all the pain of a struggle to undergo, and it was by obedience in the face of difficulty, by a high and sustained exercise of principle in the face of allurements, and by the force of dutiful sentiment rising superior to all that the tempter and the world could muster up to oppose it, that He achieved

His glorious victory. (See on Luke iv. 2.) Learn, 1. That it is no sin to be tempted. 2. That nothing can convert temptation into a sin but the consent of our own will. 3. That whilst temptation is the common lot of humanity, extraordinary temptations constitute the privilege of the best. (James, i. 12; iv. 7; 1 Pet. v. 9.)

2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights he was an hungered.

*Fasted*, entirely abstained from food. (See Luke iv. 2.) *Forty days and forty nights*. This fasting was doubtless miraculous or superhuman. Of precisely the same length were the fasts of Moses (Deut. ix. 9) and Elijah (1 Kings xix. 8.) Moses was founder of a dispensation, Elijah was restorer, and Jesus was both founder and restorer. Some see a relation between the forty days of our Lord's temptation and the forty years of Israel's trial in the wilderness, His fast being as much a witness against their carnal appetites (for it was in the indulgence of these that they sinned continually—Ex. xv. 23, 24, xvi. 2, 3, xvii. 2, 3; Num. xi. 4, 33) as a witness against Adam's. There seems to have been something mystical in the number "forty," which we can not explain. (See Gen. vii. 4, 12; Num. xiv. 33; Deut. ix. 45, xxv. 3; Ezek. iv. 6, xxix. 11; Jonah iii. 4; 2 Cor. xi. 24.) Jesus passed forty days before He began His public ministry; forty days, as if for preparation, before His ascension; and from the time of His death to the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was forty years. Fasts are evidently of Divine authority. (See Josh. vii. 6; Judg. xx. 26; Ex. xxiv. 18; 2 Sam. xii. 16; 1 Kings xix. 8; Matt. vi. 18, ix. 15; Acts xiii. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 5.) They are 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. 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*. *He was afterward an hungered*—the same as our modern word *hungry*. During the days of His fasting Jesus was doubtless in a state of ecstasy, or wholly absorbed by spiritual realities, so as to be insensible to hunger. The in-

stances of a Spinoza and a Newton show how powerful thought may suspend the demands of appetite. 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, sought to make the want of food the occasion of His sinning by the unlawful creation of food. When the people of God are sorely distressed, or when their children are dying, or when they know not how to provide them with food, or when they are disappointed or unkindly treated, then the malicious fiend insinuates hard thoughts of God into the mind.

3. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

*Came to Him.* The temptation evidently embraces two stages: the one continuing throughout the forty days' fast, the other (which embraces the temptations here enumerated), at the conclusion of that period. *He said*, having now probably a visible form, not terrifying, but as a friend, and perhaps as an "angel of light." (2 Cor. ii. 14.) *If thou be, &c.* Doubtless Satan was in some doubt about Christ's Divine Lordship; though he saw many concurrent proofs of it, yet he thought possibly it might be otherwise, and therefore tries. And as he expresses his own doubt, so he suggests the doubt to our Saviour. This language of Satan implies three things: 1. That if the Son of God had come He must be the expected Messiah; 2. that the Messiah could not be any lower personage than the Son of God himself; 3. that the greatest miracles might be expected to be wrought by Him. *Command, speak, in order that*—this effect is to be produced by a creative utterance; *these stones*, probably pointing to loaf-like stones 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. In trouble, when our Heavenly Father seems to be giving us a stone instead of bread, the tempter suggests that by over-reaching, or equivocation, a

short measure, or an unjust balance, we turn the stone into bread. This temptation, and the two which follow, are compared by some to the three-fold bait presented to Eve (Gen. iii. 6), in which the fruit being good for *food*, appealed to the appetite, and being pleasant to the *eye*, 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 three-fold description of unholy lusts by the Apostle. (1 John i. 16.) He who would selfishly seek to convert stone into bread will in reality convert bread into stone. Satan watches for the distress of man, to make it an occasion for transforming him into a beast of prey and a wicked spirit.

4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—Deut. viii. 3.

Had Christ yielded to Satan's proposition at this time, it would have been a positive non-compliance with the appointment of His Father, for His situation in the wilderness, distant from the supplies of food, was not of His own choosing—He was led by the Spirit into it. Besides, if He had done so, this would not only have impaired the perfection of His suffering obedience, but would have made it quite useless to us as an example, for we have not the miraculous power that He had ever in readiness to be exerted in the hour of calamity. It would have been a miracle, not in public, but in private, and not intended for convincing men, but for gratifying the great enemy of mankind. All our Lord's miracles were wrought for the benefit of others, not one for His own gratification. *And said.* How blessed an example of the infinite forbearance and self-denial, the meekness and wisdom of our Lord! He brings no railing accusation against the destroyer. *It is written.* No eulogium on Scripture could be more decided or impressive than this, that He who inspired it quotes it as the rule of His faith and life. Christ ever and again conquers by the Word of God: 1. By His first quotation over false doctrine; 2. By His second quotation over a false interpretation of Scripture; 3. By His third quotation over false and assumed authority. *Man shall not live, &c.* The text 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 Word of God is more than bread; bread, which is the ordinary means, cannot keep us alive, when God chooses that we shall die; but God can keep us alive without bread, when He chooses that we shall live. (See John iv. 34.) Man needs alimnt for his *soul* as well as the *body*, and that alimnt is the Divine Word. Whether it be His instructive, consoling, or preceptive word, it is by that *every word* proceeding from the mouth of God that man's soul liveth. Every question of duty is settled by the authority of God, and from that there is no appeal. We should make ourselves well acquainted with our Bible—store our minds with its passages, for they constitute the material armor by which we wrestle with the enemies of our salvation. (Eph. vi. 11, &c; 2 Tim. iii. 19.)

5. Then the devil taketh him up <sup>d</sup>into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, <sup>e</sup>Ne. xi. 1, 18; Isa. xlviii. 2 and to lii. 1; chap. xxvii. 53; Rev. x. 2.

This temptation is the third and last in Luke, who follows a doctrinal order. The true historical order is evidently here given. *Then*—with what marvelous skill the Tempter shifts the whole line of his assault! He had just urged the Lord to a distrust of His Father's love; now he urges Him to put that love to the proof in a way of his own choosing, and not of God's appointing. We are in danger of being tempted both to distrust and presumption. *Taketh him up*, doubtless by His own permission, but in a mysterious manner which is not revealed, but left for the exercise of a reverent curiosity. *Into the holy city*, Jerusalem, so-called, in spite of many a wickedness, as being the seat of the theocracy, the place where the temple was situated, and the public worship of God was performed. (Comp. Isa. xlviii. 2, lii. 1; Dan. ix. 24; Rev. xi. 2; Matt. v. 35.) *Setteth him*, literally, *made Him stand*, not by force, for such the devil cannot exercise, besides, he had not yet dropt the mask, and shown himself the evil one. *On a pinnacle of the temple*. The temple was

that immense building on the top of Mount Moriah, which had been rebuilt and adorned till it rivaled that of Solomon on the same site. The "pinnacle," or wing, as the word means, was probably Herod's royal gallery, overhanging the ravine of Kedron, at the valley of Hinnom, an immense tower, of about 700 feet, built on the very edge of this precipice, from the top of which, as any one looked, according to Josephus, "he would become dizzy, his eyes being unable to reach so vast a depth." Satan surrounds himself with holy things, conducts Jesus to the holy city and the holy temple, and encourages Him by the Holy Word of God to throw Himself fearlessly down. The evil one is perhaps *most* busy in the believer's closet, in the church, at the communion table. As in the material, so also in the spiritual world, high places are slippery places, where the head is in danger of becoming dizzy, and of betraying us into a fall.

6. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, <sup>e</sup>He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.—Ps. xci. 11, 12.

In the former temptation Satan would have Jesus doubt if He was the Son of God; in this temptation, he would remind Him of the doubts which the Jews entertained of His Lordship. "Now is your opportunity for scattering all their doubts: throw yourself boldly from this elevation, with a pomp of angels upholding and up-bearing thee; and proclaim by this one act the strength of your faith, the completeness of your dependence, and the crowd of worshipers who throng the temple beneath will at once acknowledge thee as the Christ, and make its courts resound with hosannas, and bid thee welcome as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world."

The subtlety of Satan in this temptation is evident from the fact that he knew that our Lord's errand into this world was, that He might persuade sinners to believe in Him, and thus have life through His name, as well as because the temptation was an appeal to the very inmost and most powerful and pervading emotion of the heart of the Son of God, his love to the poor, perishing sinners of Jerusalem, over whom His compassionate soul yearned, as was

attested by the tears which He afterward shed over them. Many persons, says one, in looking down a precipice from a great height, as at Niagara Falls, are conscious of a bewilderment and a dazing in which they are tempted to throw themselves down the precipice. If this is a constitutional peculiarity of men, we see in the form of the second temptation the peculiar subtlety of "the serpent." What place is too sacred for Satan to enter? If the devil led Jesus to so holy a place as the house of God, is it surprising that he leads some professors of religion into the ball-room and the theatre? It is a precious truth that the devil has no power to injure till one shall have first "cast one's self down." He can persuade to the act, but he has no power himself to achieve it. *For it is written.* "What is this I see?" says an old writer, "Satan himself, with a Bible under his arm, and a text in his mouth."\* As Jesus has repulsed him by the Word of God, he now turns that sword of the Spirit against his conqueror. The Old Testament has been quoted by Jesus, just now, by Gabriel (Luke i. 18), by God (1 Sam. ii. 30), and here, in solemn mimicry, by Satan. So that neither God, Christ, nor angels allow that slight regard for the Holy Book in which modern rationalism indulges. *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, &c.* The quotation is from Ps. xci. 11. Though this Psalm is written not concerning the Son of God in particular, but the faithful generally, yet there was no misquoting it in applying the promise which it contains, as Satan now does, to Christ, since He is the Head of the faithful. There is a lie, however, now, in the application of the words of truth. One little clause is left out, which would have altered the whole character of the quotation, viz.: "to keep thee in all thy ways." That to which the Lord was now challenged was not "a way" appointed by His Heavenly Father for His treading, and in which as such He might be sure that He

would not stumble (John xi. 9, 10), but a precipice from which He would have wantonly chosen to fling Himself down, and the promise of being kept in *all his ways* no one has a right to take to himself who has exchanged his appointed ways for any such headlong precipices as that now suggested to the Lord. A garbled text of Scripture has often been made to support a false doctrine and sanction a wrong practice.

7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.—Deut. vi. 16.

Our Lord again answers 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 sufficiently plain. (Comp. 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 our interposition for which He had no warrant, and thus would have "tempted the Lord." Making trial, by the sinner, of the patience and forbearance of God, is tempting Him; so is tampering with sin, in hope that grace will be given to resist it; so is going into evil company, making haste to be rich, and going out of Providence from a restless desire of change. We should have an enlarged acquaintance with the Bible, so as to be able to bring to bear against the enemy a special truth for each special temptation.

8. Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

*Again.* Mark the perseverance of Satan: he is twice defeated, but will make a third effort. *Taketh him.* (See on v. 5, and Luke iv. 5.) *An exceeding high mountain.* It is impossible to say with *certainty* what mountain was the scene of this, the third temptation. (See notes on verse 1.) *And sheweth him, &c.* (See on Luke iv. 5.) It is not said our Lord really *beheld* the world's kingdoms, only that Satan *showed*, that is, *pointed them out*, for the word asserts nothing

\*Compare Shakspeare, *Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 8, where Antonio says to Bassanio:

"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.  
An evil soul, producing holy witness,  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek;  
A goodly apple rotten at the heart;  
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!"

more. Perhaps Judea and its tetrarchies are meant; they are sometimes termed "the kingdoms," as Judea is sometimes denominated "the world." Or the neighboring countries may have been presented to Jesus as a specimen of the world. Or some visionary representation may have been made to His mind to assist the mountain scene. *And the glory of them;* nature's beauty and art's magnificence, the pride of power, the *éclat* of riches, the splendor of luxury, the vanity of honors, the intoxication of pleasures, and all those earthly pomps which excite so violently man's desires, were crowded into that stupendous vision. (See Isa. xxxix. 2; Matt. vi. 29; Rev. xxi. 25, 26.)

9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

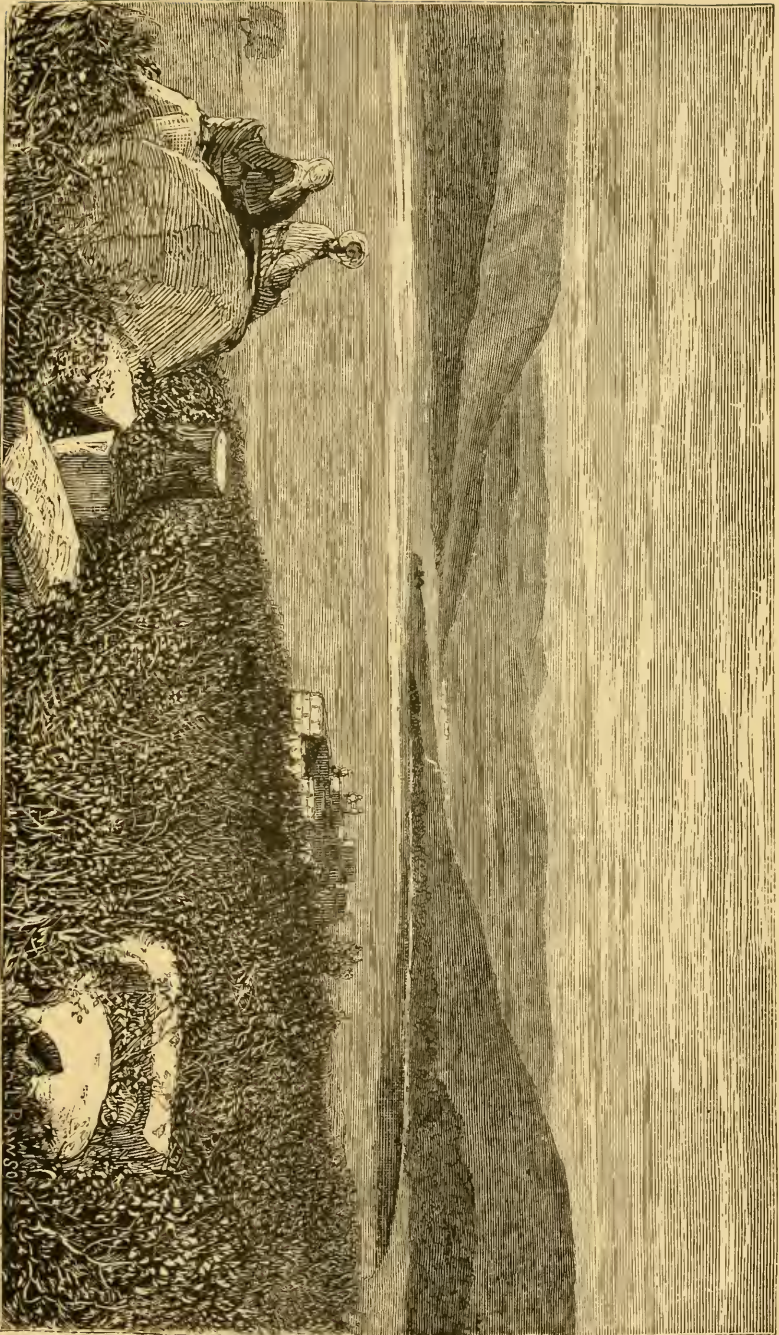
*Saith unto him.* Of course he spoke under no serpentine or bestial shape, but in a form, to the utmost of his power, able to fascinate by his blandishments, or suborn by menace and terror. *All these things, &c.* The right to give is here assumed by the devil, but falsely. True, he is denominated "the god and prince of this world" (John xii. 31; Cor. iv. 4), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. ii. 2), yet this does not imply lawful power or dominion. God has delegated to him no such authority as he here impliedly claims, and in this, as in all his vain promises and assertions, he shows himself to be the father of lies. (John viii. 44.) *If thou wilt fall down, &c.,* referring to obedience, vassalage, of which bodily homage is the symbol. Here is comfort for Christians who are pained by the suggestion of blasphemous thoughts, that Satan had the reckless audacity to make such a horrid proposition to our Lord. Satan tempts by ruling ambition, as in the case of Alexander, Cæsar and Napoleon. And how the poor fools were betrayed! Alexander died of drunkenness, Cæsar was stabbed in the Senate house by a friend, and Napoleon died in exile at St. Helena. Such an odious alliance is proposed by the devil to the moral, pious young man, when, seized with the hope of making a brilliant fortune, it is suggested that he have recourse to lies, deceit, injury to neighbors, Sabbath-breaking, and to the pious young lady whose hand is sought by

a young man of wealth, but a stranger to piety, and one to whom she cannot be united without endangering her faith, and to the gifted young minister who is tempted to obtain the applause of men, and obtain a lucrative position, by accommodating truth to the fastidiousness of the age, or join in the frivolity of its pleasures. How unutterably paltry the bribes for which we are so often contented to barter all! (See Gen. xxv. 34; Josh. vii. 21; 2 Kings v. 23; Matt. xxvi. 15.)

10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Deut. iv. 23, x. 20; Josh. xxiv. 14; 1 Sam. vii. 3.

The most wicked and monstrous proposal of the empire of the world on the condition of a compact with the devil, met with an indignant and abhorrent repulse. *Then—at once.* As Jesus did not trifle, or delay, or make any parrying with temptation, how much more necessary is it for us to be prompt and decisive in our measures with it! *Get thee hence, Satan, begone, avaunt, out of my sight.* Here Satan was disclosed. The pretended angel of light, who calls for worship, is, by our Lord's stern and stinging repulse, transformed back into himself. When an infamous proposal is made to any one, indignation is not merely justifiable, but is required, is of the essence of a true righteousness. *It is written.* (See notes on verses 4, 7.) *Thou shalt worship, &c.—*quoted from Deut. vi. 16. *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 can be no question *which* it should be. 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; see also Heb. i. 6), and since Christians "serve the Lord Christ" (Col. iii. 24), He cannot be a creature, but must be truly God. He who would prevent us from serving God, and persuade us to serve the world, is Satan, so far as we are concerned.



CAPERNAUM.





11. Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.—<sup>1</sup>Heb. i. 14.

Such was the final issue of this great and momentous conflict. The tempter, baffled in every endeavor, withdrew; and never did quit a foe with such lacerated and infuriated soul. The devil is a coward; he needs only resistance, and he runs. (James iv. 7.) *And behold, angels came and ministered unto him.* Blessed contrast! a retreating devil, and approaching angels to minister to the mysterious necessity of the Son of man. In the wilderness of Sinai, "man did eat angels' food." In this desert, the Son of Man, the very author of the salvation to the heirs of which the angels are sent forth to minister; "the true bread which came down from heaven," was strengthened with the bread of God. The mere passing away of a season of temptation is a refreshment, like the waking up out of a troubled dream, and finding it to be without reality. Jesus, as has well been said, has conquered not for Him self only, but for all his people. In many a man's life there is a *turning point* at which the soul leaps madly into the embrace of the evil one, or becomes so confirmed in love and faith that disloyalty to God is made well-nigh impossible. Judas is an example of the former; Peter of the latter. Temptation, however, cannot be expected to cease in the present life; and, as in the case of the Israelites on their journey from Egypt to Canaan, *the real giants may come last.* God's word is security, not against attacks from the devil, but against defeat. When devils go, then angels come. "This know," *Leighton* beautifully observes, "that our Lord is tender of us, and will inlay our painful conflicts with sweet comforts. And these, in a high degree, usually follow hard encounters patiently and stoutly sustained. Oh, the sweet issue our Lord gives to many a sad battle of weak Christians, wherein they possibly thought once that all was lost, and that they never should hold out, and come through it! But never think so. We shall come through all, and the day shall be ours." (See on Luke iv. 13.)

12. <sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

<sup>2</sup>Mark i. 14; Luke iii. 20, iv. 14, 31; John iv. 43.

To obtain a correct and connected view

of our Saviour's history, the Evangelists must be compared together, as one gives a more full account than another. What happened between the last verse and the present may be found in John's Gospel, from chap. i. 19, to chap. iv. 43. For an account of John's imprisonment, see xiv. 3-5, &c.; Mark vi. 17-20; Luke iii. 19, 20. *Into Galilee*, where He had formerly resided, and whence He had come to be baptized of John. (Chap. iii. 13.) Perhaps in now going to Galilee, Christ wished to take advantage of any sympathetic excitement that might have been produced in John's favor by the unjust persecution of Herod.

13. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Nephthalim:

Departing into Galilee, our Lord took Nazareth in His way. (See Luke iv. 16-30.) *Leaving Nazareth*—"not being honored in His own country;" *He came and dwelt in Capernaum*, a thriving commercial place, which was situated near the N. W. corner of the sea of Genesareth (John vi. 17), in the confines of the tribes of Zebulon and Nephthalim.

14. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 15. <sup>1</sup>The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles*; 16. <sup>2</sup>The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.—<sup>3</sup>Isa. ix. 1, 2. <sup>4</sup>Isa. xlii. 7; Luke ii. 32.

This quotation is made from Isa. i. 1, 2. Although in these the prophet seems also to have had in view the oppression of the Assyrians, under which at that time Northern Palestine groaned, the passages are strictly Messianic in their meaning. The prophecy is now raised to its higher sense. Its meaning is this: "*Once* the tribes of Zebulon and Nephthalim were *debased*, (because, being situated on the borders of Canaan, they were exposed to the invasions of the enemy), but afterwards they were made *glorious*." How? by the Saviour's presence and preaching. Our Lord's going into that region, and making it the principal scene of His labors, naturally recalled to mind this prophecy, as then receiving a part of its fulfillment. The region which had been the first to suffer captivity was the first to enjoy the light of that truth which maketh free. (John viii. 32, 36.) The slight difference in orthography between Zebulon and

Nephtalim in the Old and New Testaments, results from their difference of sound in the Hebrew and Greek, by which, in transferring them from one language to another, the orthography would be made to conform with the word as spoken. *Galilee of the Gentiles*. Upper Galilee, where Gentiles were more numerous.

17. <sup>m</sup>From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, <sup>n</sup>Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.  
<sup>m</sup>Mark i. 14, 15. <sup>n</sup>Chap. iii. 2, x. 7.

*From that time*, the time that John was cast into prison. Christ had before this time preached, but not in so public and continuous a manner as afterwards. *To preach*. In humbling Himself to the work of preaching, Jesus has highly exalted it. No office so honorable as that of the preacher. The darkest days of the Church have been those when it was lightly esteemed. *And to say, Repent, &c.* Our Lord commences His preaching with the same words which the Forerunner had already uttered, though the call to repent has now a higher meaning than when first uttered by the Baptist. (See chap. iii. 2, and notes on the verse.) Repentance is grief for having committed sin, and turning away from it with abhorrence, accompanied with sincere endeavors, in reliance on God's grace, to live in humble and holy obedience to the Divine commands. It is the *beginning* of religion, but must never cease upon earth. *Phillip Henry* said, "Repentance shall follow me to the gates of heaven." *Rorland Hill* observed, that if he could regret anything when he entered heaven, it would be that he should no more shed the penitential tear. Observe the *for* between the two phrases, which is the true link between the preaching which demands and the promise which bestows. The desire for the kingdom of heaven should be the motive of repentance. No true repentance can spring merely from the terror of the law. How sweet the invitation Jesus gives—the offer of pardon to a repenting sinner! but how much more that of a kingdom! a kingdom of righteousness here, and of glory hereafter.

18. <sup>m</sup>And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.  
<sup>m</sup>Mark i. 16, 17, 18; Luke v. 2. <sup>n</sup>John i. 42.

*Walking*—passing from place to place, in the exercise of His ministry. *Sea of Galilee*, so called because the province of Galilee

bordered its western side. It was also called Lake of Gennesaret (Luke v. 1), from the plain which lay "at its north-western angle," and Sea of Tiberias (John vi. 1), from the city of that name, which stood on the western side. *Saw two brethren, Simon called Peter* (or Cephas), Peter being the Greek word for a stone, and Cephas being the Syriac for the same. (John 1. 42.)

*Andrew*. A purely Greek name, which, however, occurs among the Jews at a later period. This was not the first meeting of our Lord with the two brothers, for while in attendance upon John's ministry, they had already enjoyed an interview with Jesus (John i. 40–42), and afterwards they seem to have returned to Galilee, and remained with Him as His disciples (John ii. 2, 11–12), of this call a fuller account is given in Luke v. 1–11. Their casting a net into the sea, which shows they were just about to commence their daily labor, is mentioned to bring out the significance of their instantly following Christ. *For they were fishers*, a business which formed a large share of the occupation of the dwellers upon the shores of Lake Gennesaret. It was the will of God to choose men by whose instrumentality He intended to remodel the world, out of the humbler class, that no flesh might glory in His presence, and the excellency of the power appear to be of God, and not of men. (See 1 Cor. i. 27, ii. 4, 5.) But as these men enjoyed the extraordinary illumination of the Holy Spirit, no argument can now be drawn from this in favor of an unlearned ministry.

19. And he said unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.—<sup>m</sup>Luke v. 10, 11.

*Follow me*, rather, *come ye after me*, i. e., in the sense of becoming His servants and messengers. We must distinguish, 1, between their preliminary call, implying discipleship in general and adoption of Christ's cause, but without any special obligation (John i. 35, &c.). 2, their selection (here made—see also Luke, v. 4) as continuous and regular followers of the Lord, and, 3, the choice of twelve to be Apostles. (Matt. x. 2–4.) Jesus gradually prepares His people for service and trial. As in mental training, so in spiritual, there is an education, a general progressive dis-

cipline. The call of Jesus to follow him is, 1, a call to faith; 2, a call to labor; 3, a call to suffering and cross-bearing; 4, a call to our blessed home. *I will make you fishers of men*, raising them from a lower to a higher *fishing*, as David was from a lower to a higher *feeding*. (Ps. lvi. 70-72.) They were to retain their nets, but souls were to be the nobler prey. Jesus here promises to qualify them for their new work, and to give them success. Diligent effort is our part, the blessing is Christ's. (See Luke v. 10.) As Simon and Andrew were called by Jesus when engaged in their usual vocation, and God called Moses, David, and Amos from the sheep-fold, Gideon from the thrashing floor, Elisha from the plow; we see that God honors and consecrates daily industry, and that there is a beautiful harmony between laborious ardor in our earthly employments and religious earnestness.

20. †And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.—Mark x. 28; Luke xviii. 28.

The call from Jesus to these men was an effectual one. Though not promised any temporal rewards, and called to a more laborious service than they were accustomed to, *straightway*, immediately, without deliberating, without conferring with flesh and blood, without reasoning on maxims of expediency, they *left their nets*, which had hitherto been the means of their livelihood, to rot on the sand, and *followed* Jesus, with a fidelity and constancy never surpassed. Beautiful instance of prompt and self-sacrificing obedience! Let us strive to imitate this model, so that, if not called to give up that state of life to which God has already called us, we may at least honor Jesus by bearing meekly little crosses, by exhibiting in the quiet of our own homesteads the lovely, submissive, patient spirit of the cross-bearing disciples.

21. †And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them. 22. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

\*Mark i. 19, 20; Luke v. 10.

Jesus, proceeding a little distance, found James and John at their own station or place of anchorage. (See on Luke v. 14.) It is inferred from this passage that James was the elder brother of John. *Other two*

*brethren*. The selection of two *pairs* of brothers on this occasion, by Christ, to be in constant attendance upon Him, was, perhaps, so ordered that each of them might have the comfort of being supported and counseled by a brother engaged in the same work, or, perhaps, in order that all His ministers, to the end of time, should thus be reminded that they should be bound together in the blessed bonds of concord and tenderness. *In a ship*, a small fishing vessel. *Mending their nets*, either preparing them for work, or repairing them after work. "Ministers," says *Henry*, "should be always teaching or studying; they may always find something to do. Mending their nets is, in its season, as necessary as fishing." The death of *Zebedee* is recognized in chap. xx. 20. *Called them*. (See on v. 19.) James and John, with a like spirit of prompt and cheerful obedience to that of Simon and Andrew, left the ship with their father and hired servants (Mark i. 20), and followed Jesus. Religion is not contemplation, but action. Where there is no way left but either to forsake parents or Christ, we are to part with father and mother rather than with the Saviour. But the narrative seems to imply that Zebedee gave his consent to the course his sons pursued. If we are to win others for the Lord, we ourselves must have been first won by Him. A minister must be called of God. Let us not only call ourselves brethren, but prove ourselves such. The first step in the conquest of the world was taken when Jesus summoned the four Apostles (v. 18) to become fishers of men to all the world.

23. †And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people.

\*Chap. ix. 5; Mark i. 21, 39; Luke iv. 15, 41. †Chap. xxiv. 14. ‡Mark i. 34.

To preserve the continuity of the narrative, we must here turn to Mark i. 21-8, Luke iv. 31-37, and Matt. viii. 14-17. John remained stationary, Jesus *went about*. It was by going about that He in so short a ministry accomplished so much good. He is our example in diligence in service, as well as watchfulness in prayer. *All Galilee*. This was Christ's first Galilean circuit. The phrase probably implies only Upper Galilee, but may be regarded as giving a

summary or general view of our Lord's activity throughout Galilee. The number of towns and villages which Galilee contained is estimated by Josephus at 204, and the population of each, upon an average, at not less than 15,000 souls. *Teaching in their synagogues*—these were scattered throughout the villages of Judea, as churches are among us. *Preaching, &c.* This means announcing the joyful news of the reign of God, that is, of the Messiah's having come. Preaching should always bear the impress of the love of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and of power, and be adapted to the wants of the age. *Sickness*, a disease of the whole body, such as fevers, inflammatory diseases, &c. *Disease*, any incipient malady causing softness and general debility. *Among the people*, even those were healed whose diseases were a matter of public notoriety. Jesus conferred temporal as well as spiritual blessings. His curing diseases gave an earnest and foreshadow of that blessed era when all sickness shall be ended.

24. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

*Syria*, through which the rumor of our Lord's miracles was circulated, with more or less clearness, seems to have comprehended in its widest limits all the country lying between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. *They brought, &c.* As far as faith in His miraculous power extended they brought such sufferers to Him. *Sick*, all that were ailing, or unwell, *that were taken, &c.*; this is a distinct class, referring to those attacked with acute diseases, *possessed with devils*, that were demonized. *Lunatic*. This word, which means *moon-struck*, signifies insane persons whose case is supposed to be aggravated by the influence of the moon *Palsy*. Under this general name many infirmities were comprehended: 1. Apoplexy, a paralytic shock which affected the whole body; 2. Hemiplegy, which paralyzed only one side of the body; 3. Paraplegy, which paralyzed all the parts below the neck; 4. Catalepsy, a contraction of the muscles in the whole, or in a part of the body; 5. The cramp, with which, when the limbs were attacked, they remained immovable, sometimes

turned in, and sometimes out, in the same position as when they were first seized. Of many of the miracles here mentioned in the mass, a particular description is afterward given in the Gospels. *And he healed them.* These healings were at once the Saviour's credentials and illustrations of "the joyful tidings" which he proclaimed, as He healed all manner of diseases, so He could forgive all manner of sins.

25. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

Mark, iii. 7.

Even at this stage of our Lord's ministry multitudes externally followed Him. Some accompanied Him from place to place to enjoy His instruction; others, doubtless, to gratify their curiosity in witnessing His wonderful works. The multitudes were drawn in the first instance from Galilee itself, and swelled by others coming from different quarters. "Like John, Jesus produced by His preaching a general impression upon the people, but in a higher measure. John remained stationary; Jesus went about; John announced the wrath to come; Jesus brought to light the life-giving power of the Gospel; John displayed only one miracle, that of self-renunciation and the moral greatness of a true prophet as exhibited in his own history; he did not wonder, while it appeared as the inmost and distinguishing characteristic of Christ's life to work miracles of healing, of deliverance, of comfort, and of salvation. To John the people flocked in numbers, again to return to their homes, while of those who betook themselves to Jesus, many remained to follow Him whithersoever He went." *Decapolis* was a district lying chiefly on the east side of the Jordan. It contained ten cities. Hence its name. "This region, once so populous and prosperous, from which multitudes flocked to hear the Saviour, and through which multitudes followed his footsteps, is now almost without an inhabitant. Six out of the ten cities are completely ruined and deserted." *From beyond Jordan*—from the Greek word *περαν, peran*, signifying *beyond*, the country beyond Jordan was called Perea. This name in its largest sense was applied to the whole strip of territory lying east of the Jordan, and bounded on

the east by mountains, which divided it from Arabia Deserta. In its narrower sense, it designated the territory east of the Jordan, toward the south. According

to Josephus, its northern limit was at Pella, its southern at Macheron, its east at Philadelphia, its west the Jordan.

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1. What is said about our Lord's temptation? 2. When, and where, did it occur? 3. Explain "led up of the Spirit." 4. What evidence is there that the devil is an active and malicious being? 5. In what sense was Jesus "tempted?" 6. How long did He abstain from food? 7. What is peculiar about the number "forty?" 8. What is said about fasting? 9. How many stages does the temptation embrace? 10. State what they are? 11. What was Christ's answer to the first temptation? 12. In what did the second temptation consist? 13. How was it met? Explain the answer to it. 14. What is it to tempt God? 15. What was the third temptation? 16. What mountain is referred to? 17. What did Christ reply to the third temptation? 18. What followed? 19. Why did Jesus depart into Galilee? 20. Why, and where, was John imprisoned? 21. Why did Christ dwell in Capernaum? 22. How did He commence His preaching? 23. What is said of Simon and Andrew? 24. What of James and John? 25. What did Jesus subsequently do?

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## CHAPTER V.

*Christ beginneth his sermon in the mount: 3 declaring who are blessed, 13 who are the salt of the earth, 14 the light of the world, the city on the hill, 15 the candle: 17 that he came to fulfil the law. 21 What it is to kill, 27 to commit adultery, 33 to swear: 38 exhorteth to suffer wrong, 44 to love even our enemies, 48 and to labor after perfectness.*

Having by His miracles established His Divine authority, and acquired, of course, a right to the attention of His hearers, and a powerful influence over their minds, our Lord proceeded to instruct them in what is commonly called His Sermon on the Mount—contained in this and the two following chapters. It is the longest of His public discourses recorded. It contains a greater variety of new, important and excellent moral precepts than is anywhere to be found in the same compass. "The richness and beauty of the gems sparkling through it," said the illustrious Webster, "prove them to belong to the treasury of heaven." Luke has also (vi. 20-49) presented the same discourse substantially, though in a smaller compass, his greater brevity being probably explicable by his repetition of the like sentiments in other passages of his Gospel. That the discourse recorded by him, and that which is here given, are identical, most harmonists and interpreters assume. Both begin with the same blessings, and end with the same striking parable concerning the difference

between hearing and doing. 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. Besides, both discourses mark the same period in our Lord's ministry, when His fame had brought multitudes around Him; both Evangelists represent our Saviour, directly after the discourse, as entering Capernaum, and both record the healing of the centurion's servant as at once following upon His return to that city.

This sermon may be viewed as consisting of ten divisions. The first (ch. v. 3-12) consists of beatitudes, in the first and fourth of which we recognize Him who invites men to Himself (Matt. xi. 29, 30), describing the Christian life from its commencement to its termination. The second (vs. 13-16) calls for the manifestation of that life, for the good of man, unto the glory of God. The third (vs. 17-20) points to the truth and importance of that whereby the life Divine is nourished, the word of righteousness as fulfilled by Christ. The fourth (vs. 21-48) presents a contrast be-

tween the law, as viewed by them "of old time," and the truth of the Word as revealed by Him who introduces us into the perfect law of liberty. The fifth (ch. vi. 1-18) warns against formalism, and directs to the true manner of serving or worshipping God, our Father, "who seeth in secret." The sixth (vs. 19-34) shows the reasonableness of faith in God, and exposes the folly of that worldly wisdom which is most destructive to the spiritual life. The seventh (ch. vii. 1-6) forbids presumption in judging, and also the prostituting of that which is holy. The eighth (vs. 7-14) invites us to pray, giving the assurance of a favorable answer. We are then told more fully as to what, and of whom, we are to ask. Then we have the golden rule, the practical use of the Law and the Prophets, as read in the light of the Gospel. Then, as to where we are to knock—it is "at the strait gate." We must practice self-denial if we would fully participate in the blessings of the life everlasting. The ninth (vs. 15-20) bids us beware of false prophets, and tells us how they, as well as the true witnesses, may be known, and intimates that, however men may deceive others now, the faithful Judge will give a true witness hereafter. The tenth (vs. 21-7) tells us that nothing can stand the trial, except that which is in truth built upon the Rock. It is only as standing in the grace of God that faith can endure the trials to which it is, and will be, subjected.

AND seeing the multitudes, <sup>he</sup> went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:—<sup>4</sup>Mark iii. 13.

The multitudes—spoken of in chap. iv. 25, and who awaited His descent from the mountain, whither He had retired to pray, and to choose the Twelve (Luke vi. 17). A mountain, an eminence which, as being still, solemn, and impressive, was a suitable place to impart instruction. As the Old Law had been promulgated on Sinai, it was proper that the New Law should be delivered on a mountain also.

What mountain this was is not stated by either Evangelist. *Dr. Jamieson* says: "It was an eminence a few miles distance from the city of Tiberias, which rises to an elevation of from 200 to 300 feet, well fitted by its conical shape to accommodate

the dense multitudes that covered its sloping sides, and commanding an extensive prospect, of which the preacher might avail Himself, in His usual manner, for the purposes of moral instruction." He also adds, that "we have only, by an effort of imagination, to place ourselves amid the listening group on the Mount of Beatitudes, in order to see and feel that many things of which the allusions in the sermon seem remote and obscure, *sprang* happily out of the circumstances, and came home to the hearers with all the force and vividness of an appeal to the senses.

"Below lay in calm and majestic beauty the Lake Tiberias, on whose broad surface many of those who surrounded our Lord were in the habit of prosecuting their daily toils, and from whose valuable fisheries they procured their ordinary food for themselves and their families. Before them was a wide prospect of a cultivated land; here adorned with a carpet of luxuriant herbage, to which the moisture of morning had given a recent freshness, but which noon would see fading beneath the scorching beams of the sun, and fit only to be mowed down for fuel; and there, covered with the large and fleecy breed of Palestine, browsing at pleasure, unconscious of the danger which might await them at night-fall, if their ravenous enemy should find his way into the fold, through the ill-disguise of some mangled wool-skin of the flock; here, intersected by a hedge-row of thorns and thistles, that formed the impervious boundary of the fields; and there, by walls on which the creeping branches of the vine and fig-tree clung for support, under the weight of their mellow produce; while, in yonder open thrashing-floor, swept by the gentle breeze, the farmer was winnowing the last remnants of his crop, and pressing down the heaps of grain into the well-shaken sacks.

"It seems to have been spring, too, when Nature was bursting the fetters of her winter's sleep, and new life and animation pervaded the whole range of the animal and vegetable kingdom. The husbandman was preparing his fields with the salt manure, previous to committing his seed to their grateful bosom; the flowers of Palestine were beginning to strew the plains,

and to display their brilliant and gorgeous beauties; the trees in the adjoining gardens were unfolding their early blossoms, and delighting the spectators with the promise that they would each bring forth "fruit after their kinds;" while the feathered tribe were skimming on sportive wing around, and warbling their wood-notes wild among the branches.

"The city of Bethulia rose in the distance, whose flat roofs, beaming with the effulgence of the orient sun, made it an object too conspicuous to be hid from any beholder. On the sides of its rocky platform were seen the deep and rugged bed of the land-flood, that had rolled its impetuous stream, carrying devastation to the hamlet along with it; and, at the bottom, a few paltry cottages raised their humble heads, through whose mud-built and flimsy walls the hand of the midnight plunderer could easily work his way; while, to complete the picture, at one part might be faintly heard sending forth their interminable howl the dogs of Tiberias, the pest of that and every other city of the East; and at a farther bend of the lake, were the towns of the Gadarenes, infamous for the breeding of swine—the idea of both of which animals was associated in the mind of every Jew, with all the abominations of insatiable voracity, and the grossest uncleanness.

"These various objects in the landscape around him, as probably seen from the eminence on which he stood, our Lord enlisted, with singular beauty, into the service of this admirable discourse."

"According to *tradition*, the 'Mount of Beatitudes' lies a little west of the Sea of Galilee, and is a square-shaped hill, about sixty feet in height, with two tops, called the *Horns of Hattin*, from the village of Hattin, at its base. The platform at the top is evidently suitable for the collection of a multitude, and corresponds precisely to the 'level place' (Luke vi. 17) to which Jesus would 'come down' as from one of its higher horns to address the people."

*When he was set.* This was the usual posture of eminent teachers among the Jews. (See Luke iv. 20.) *His disciples came unto him*—already a large circle, more or less attracted and subdued by His preaching and mira-

cles, in addition to the smaller band of devoted adherents.

2. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

This graphic mode of representation excites interest in the words spoken. (Comp. Job iii. 1, xxxii. 20; Acts viii. 35, x. 34.) Disciples and people solemnly waited for the first word which, under God's heaven, with His eye upon the holy land upon earth, and after such a preparation for such preaching as had never before been heard among men, Jesus would proceed to utter. From this expression Luther derives the following advice to preachers: "Stand boldly forward, open thy mouth and begin; have soon done." According to him, the preacher is to learn from it a lesson of bold and fearless speaking: "speak out plainly, respect and spare no man, let the arrow hit where it may."

In relation to the Beatitudes which follow, let the following things be noted: 1. They possess the air of paradox, placing happiness in dispositions and circumstances which men generally deem incompatible with it. 2. They commonly admit limitations from other parts of Scripture. 3. They do not relate so directly, if at all, to the manner in which men are to obtain happiness, as to the character of those who are really happy. 4. The dispositions they represent are not amiable, natural tempers, but modes of thought and feeling produced by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the faith of the truth. 5. They are all linked together as by a golden chain, and are to be found, though doubtless with a great variety of degree, in every man who has been born again. 6. They are stated separately, that we may apply ourselves the more particularly to them severally. 7. The things they promise, instead of being mere arbitrary rewards, in each case grow out of the characters to which they are attached, and in their complete form are but the appropriate coronation of them.

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

• Luke vi. 20. See Ps. li. 17; Prov. xvi. 19, xxix. 23; Isa. lvii. 15, lxvi. 2.

The first sermon of Jesus, instead of denouncing wrath or threatening punishment, dawns in benedictions. *The poor in*



*spirit*. Reference is had here, not to external situation, but to disposition and character. It is true that the poor are for the most part in a better preparation of mind to receive and embrace the Gospel than the rich are (1 Cor. i. 26; James ii. 5), but poverty will save no man. It is the inner heart that makes the outer state, not the outer state that guarantees the inner heart. There are noble hearts clothed in rags; there are mean and vulgar ones clothed in purple and in fine linen every day. It is what we are *in our own estimation* that is here intended. Those who are poor in spirit not only have a sense of spiritual want, but a lowly frame of heart, not swelled either with desires, or delight, or conceit of any worldly advantage, or self-excellency. Whether rich or poor, they do not trust in their own righteousness, wisdom, strength or inherent graces. • *Blessed are*. The word translated "blessed" has not in the original, down to verse 11, either *are* or *shall be* connected with it, although the translation gives it correctly enough for the obvious sense. The words are not an opinion or a prayer, but a simple *proclamation*. Our Lord here truly speaks with authority. As happiness is higher than pleasure, so blessedness is higher than happiness. The poor in spirit are blessed, because their humility empties their hearts of every rival, and makes the Lord Jesus Christ truly precious to them. It makes them content in that state in which God has placed them. It adorns their character. The promise of grace is made to them. (Isa. lvii. 15; Zeph. iii. 12; Prov. iii. 34; James iv. 6.) *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*; they have now all the blessings and privileges of the kingdom on earth, and hereafter shall enjoy the dignity and happiness of the kingdom of glory, as "kings and priests unto God."

4. <sup>f</sup>Blessed *are* they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

<sup>g</sup>Isa. lxi. 2, 3; Luke vi. 21; John xvi. 20; 2 Cor. i. 7, Rev. xxi. 4.

This promise is only given to such mourning as springs from poverty of spirit, for what our Lord here preached presupposes the work of the law and the discipline of preparatory grace upon the soul. Happy are they who "sorrow for sin after a godly sort," for they are comforted with

a sense of free and full forgiveness through faith in Christ—who mourn at the consciousness of the remains of sin in their hearts, for their weeping moments are their most welcome, and never are they more at home than when looking on Him whom they have pierced, and mourning for Him—who mourn over the moral state of the world (Ezek. ix. 4; Ps. cxix. 158), and "weep with them who weep" (Rom. xii. 15), for they are comforted by the assurance that a period is hastening onward when God shall be universally glorified, and the reasons of all prevailing disorder and sorrow cleared up—who mourn that they can do so little good, for they are comforted by the precious promise, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy"—who mourn over their afflictions, for they are made to know that they have the sympathy of Jesus, that God is thus training them up to higher holiness, and that soon their mourning will be ended. (Rev. vii. 13-17. See Isa. lxi. 1-3, xxx. 18; John xvi. 7, xiv. 16-26.) The profitableness of preaching is not to be measured by the degrees of comfort which it affords us. Sometimes conviction may be more necessary for us than comfort.

5. <sup>e</sup>Blessed *are* the meek; for <sup>h</sup>they shall inherit the earth.—<sup>f</sup>Ps. xxxvii. 11. <sup>g</sup>See Rom. iv. 13.

It is easy to see the connection between this beatitude and those which precede it. If those who are poor in spirit, and mourners, are found humbled and broken with the beginning of such a disposition, so shall they, when comforted by their *reception* of consolation, advance yet further in this meekness of soul. Meekness in relation to God is a prompt submission of ourselves to His wisdom and will, and that, not only to believe what He teaches, and undertake what He enjoins, but also with patience and cheerfulness to suffer what He is pleased to inflict. In relation to men, it consists in general in a quiet, peaceable, courteous and friendly disposition and deportment towards all those with whom we have anything to do, and that, whether they be our superiors, inferiors or equals, whether they be our friends or enemies, or indifferently affected toward us. Meekness is opposed to anything like a morose, silent and sulky temper, and to

the spirit of revenge. Yet it is perfectly compatible with a just defense of one's rights when this really becomes necessary, with the indignation purely manifested against sin. *They shall inherit the earth, i. e.,* those things which are, without question, the greatest  *blessings* upon earth, calmness and composure of spirit, tranquility, cheerfulness, peace and comfort of mind. The meek are excluded from no rational pleasure, no legitimate delight; and as they are more exempt from anxiety and pain than other men, their sum total of happiness is greater. If piety could even command for His disciples the whole that earth can now give, would Christ on that account have called them  *blessed*? Would He not rather have warned them to beware of the deceitfulness of riches, and the abundance of honors thus likely to flow into their bosom? The promise of  *inheriting* the earth, therefore, must, in its fullest sense, have reference to the "*new Heavens,*" and that "*new earth,*" of which Peter speaks (2 Peter iii. 13), and for which the saints of God are ever looking. (See Rom. viii. 19-22; Matt. xix. 28; Col. iii. 4; Heb. ix. 28; Rev. xxv. 1, 7; v. 9, 10; xx. 1-5; xxi.)

6. Blessed  *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.  
Is. lv. 1, and lxxv. 13.

Verses 3, 4 and 5 have expressed, under various forms, the sense of want; this verse intimates the  *object* of that want. For the manner in which the term righteousness is used in the Old Testament, especially in the prophecies with regard to the Messiah, see Dan. ix. 24; Is. xlvi. 12, 13; li. 5, 6; lvi. 1. The phrase here denotes holiness, uprightness in the most extensive sense, in heart and life, toward God and man. Hunger and thirst are expressive metaphors of ardent desire. (See Amos viii. 11; Ps. xxxiv. 11; xlii. 1; Isa. lv. 1; lxxv. 13; lxxix. 10; John iv. 34; vi. 35; vii. 37.) As these are the keenest of our appetites, the figures denote those whose deepest cravings are after spiritual blessings. (Gen. xlix. 18; Ps. cxix. 20.) It is not  *happiness*, in itself and first of all that they long for, but  *righteousness*. It is ours to desire it, it is for God to give it. Those are called  *blessed*, not who  *possess* this righteousness, but who  *desire* it. They

are  *blessed*, because they are sure to obtain what they so earnestly seek, and because their intense desire for righteousness is evidence that they are, or will be, in a gracious state. (See Ps. cvii. 9; cxlvi. 7; lxxv. 5; xxii. 27; Isa. xli. 17); but mainly because  *they shall be filled, i. e.,* satisfied. Christians in this world receive of Christ's fullness, grace for grace. Even here they see in themselves, day by day, that improvement which they thirst for, and hereafter, awaking up after God's likeness, they shall be satisfied with it. (Ps. xvii. 15.) Their salvation shall be complete and everlasting. Their present longing is the dilating of the vessel that it may contain the more.

7. Blessed  *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.  
Ps. xli. 1; chapter vi. 14; Mark xi. 25; 2 Tim. i. 16; Heb. vi. 10; James ii. 13.

From this verse the discourse is addressed, not, as hitherto, to those who  *desire*, but to those who  *possess*. There follow three virtues of possession: pity, purity and peace. The very first grace that grows, like a beautiful spring flower, on the ground of righteousness now received, is the grace of mercy. We must not confound with this that principle of compassion which God has planted in all men towards their fellow-beings, and which, when it is cherished by an enlightened conscience, is productive of great and good effects to society, but which, after all, is a mere instinctive feeling, is no proper object of moral approbation, and is frequently found in conjunction with principles and habits most decidedly condemned by the Divine law. The merciful spirit to which the promise is annexed is an effect of the grace of God, or of love written upon the fleshly tables of the heart. (See Matt. v. 23; Eph. iv. 32.) It is more than a feeling; it is an operative principle, regarding, with active beneficence, both the bodies and the souls of men—their temporal and eternal interests. It looks not at the merit of the sufferer, but his misery. The merciful are  *blessed* in the very possession of this disposition, for it is an approach to the character of God (Mi. vii. 18), it constitutes one of the great evidences so frequently given in the Scriptures of Christian character, and it has special benedictions prom-

ised to it. (Ps. xxxvii. 26; Isa. lviii. 6-11; Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15, xviii. 21-35; Mark xi. 25, 26, &c.) *For they shall obtain mercy.* The display of a merciful disposition is calculated to excite kind feelings on the part of all who witness such displays. Those whom the Saviour here describes shall obtain mercy from God, in this world and at the day of final retribution. (2 Tim. i. 18; also, 2 Sam. xxii. 26; Prov. xix. 17; Ps. xli. 1-3; Matt. vi. 14; Heb. vi. 10.) Let it be carefully noted that our merciful disposition is not the ground on which we obtain mercy. Our Lord's design is not to explain the foundation on which the hope of mercy is to rest, but to delineate the character of His genuine disciples. The mercy obtained is, according to what has been beautifully called the gracious requital of the kingdom of God, the recompense of grace to those who are faithful to what they have received. Divine mercy must, from its very nature, be free; to speak of obtaining it, therefore, as some do, by what they call deeds of charity, is contradiction and absurdity.

8. <sup>b</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for <sup>1</sup>they shall see God.

<sup>1</sup>Ps. xv. 2, and xxiv. 4; Heb. xii. 14. <sup>1</sup>1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 James iii. 2, 3.

As the mercy noticed in the preceding verse is not that false kindness which goes hand in hand with the most unbridled indulgence of one's own flesh, therefore purity of heart is next spoken of as the test of true mercy. Purity of heart consists in that steady direction of the soul toward the divine life which excludes every other object from the homage of the heart. It implies a life pure in the inmost tendency and direction of the heart, because it is entirely set upon what is eternally and absolutely pure. The pure in heart are such as, having been regenerated by the Holy Ghost (John iii. 9), are influenced by the fear and love of God in their habitual conduct. "Their hearts are sanctified by faith" (Acts xv. 9), and "sprinkled from an evil conscience." (Heb. x. 22.) They do not aim merely at outward correctness, but at inward holiness. They are the sincerely upright and pious, whose hearts correspond to their outward profession of love to God. *For they shall see God.* They shall see God in life's trials, in life's pros-

perity, in all His providential dealings, in all creation, specially in the sacred page, and in ordinances. When the heart is clean, the eye is clear. Congeniality of character is requisite to the appreciation of character. When purity makes us like God, then can we realize and see His countenance. This vision of God commences when the eye of the soul opens (Eph. i. 18); it is perfected when in eternity we shall see Him face to face. (Ps. xxiv. 4; Heb. xii. 14; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2, v. 3.) In the East it was reckoned the highest privilege and happiness of a subject to be admitted into that splendid circle which surrounded the person of their sovereign. The Hindoos often speak, too, of devout persons having been favored with a *sight* of their guardian deity. *Ward* tells a story, in which a sage is represented as being refused the *sight* of Jugunnat'hu, as he stood charged with many most immoral and sanguinary deeds. These circumstances will show the force and beauty of the expression, "*see God.*"<sup>9</sup>

9. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

The word translated *peace-makers*, denotes not only one who makes peace between others, but who is also himself of a peaceful and quiet temper; who studies peace, follows after peace, and after all those things which make for peace. Christians are careful not to offend any; they do not take those occasions of quarrel which may be offered to them; they are easily reconciled in case any quarrel has happened between them and others. They endeavor (so far as they may without incurring blame) to compose and reconcile the differences of other men. They seek to diffuse peace among the nations, and in the church, by bringing Christianity to its proper loving tone. (Gen. xiii. 7, 8; Ex. ii. 13, comp. Ps. lxxii. 7; cxxii. 6; Isa. ii. 4, xl. 6-9; Luke vi. 27; Acts vii. 26; James iii. 16.) They do not, however, seek peace by a compromise with sin, or the sacrifice of truth and duty. The blessedness of the peace-makers follows the blessedness of the pure in heart, as if peace were the blossom that grows upon the stem of purity. No peace is real, except it be based on principle. *For they shall be called the*

children of God, *i. e.*, they shall be the objects of God's parental care, shall be like Him in the possession of His peaceful, heavenly temper. (2 Cor. xiii. 11; see Hos. i. 10.) This is the last description of the high aim of discipleship, beyond which there is no higher step to be taken, for this makes disciples as their Lord. (Isa. ix. 6; Luke ii. 14.) The promise will be fully realized only with the perfected glory of the children of God as joint heirs with Christ. (Rom. viii. 17.)

10. <sup>10</sup> Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17; <sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12; <sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iii. 14.

Though ye also suffer for righteousness' sake, yet are ye and shall ye be blessed notwithstanding. (1 Peter iii. 14.) Christ did not conceal from His followers that they would be persecuted. How must the history of the coming ages have stood before Him when He spoke these words! (1 Cor. iv. 9-13; 2 Cor. xi. 23-7; Heb. xi. 36-38.) For righteousness' sake is equivalent to: for the belief and profession of Christianity, and for the performance of Christian duty. (Luke vi. 22.) "It is," as *Augustine* says, "not the punishment, but the cause, which makes the martyr." (See 2 Chron. xviii. 7; John iii. 20.) *Blessed are they.* They drink of the same cup which their Master drank. They are confessing Him before men, and He will confess them before His Father and the angels. (1 Peter iv. 13, 14; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Phil. i. 29; Rev. xx. 4, xi. 18.) *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The kingdom of heaven is transcendently elevated above all the transitory circumstances of this lower world. (Rev. i. 6; 1 Peter xi. 9; Heb. xii. 28.) The promise given in verse 3 is repeated here. Thus does our Lord set the seal to His discourse, making the first and eighth beatitudes like the corresponding clasps at the two extremities of a chain, where every bead is a blessing. 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.

11. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.—Luke vi. 22. <sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iv. 14.

This verse is a further explanation of verse 10, as is evident from the absence of

the promise here, that having been already given there. The persecution is traced in three stages: *Revile you*, or, abuse you to your face, in opposition to backbiting. (See Mark xv. 32.) *Persecute you.* The persecution in verse 10 signifies that of the hand; this, of the tongue, as calumny, &c. *All manner of evil*, literally, *every evil word: i. e.*, every kind of charge or accusation. *Falsely*, in wanton falsehood and slander, whatever their wicked malice conceiveth. All this must be done *falsely* and for *Christ's sake*, in order to bring us within the terms of the blessing. Slander is a part of the martyr's portion. No man was ever yet put to death as a good man. The word *falsely* applies in sense to all the words expressive of persecution and reproach. *For my sake.* Christ here identifies Himself and His cause with that of righteousness, binding up the cause of righteousness in the world with the reception of Himself. He is righteousness incarnate. (See Mark i. 24; Matt. iii. 14; Rev. iii. 7.) *Blessed*—amid all their sufferings they would be supported by the peace of God and the hope of glory.

12. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 23; Acts v. 41, Rom. v. 3; James i. 2; <sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iv. 13. <sup>2</sup> Neh. ix. 26; Matt. xxiii. 34, 37; Acts vii. 52; <sup>1</sup> 1 Thes. ii. 15.

The encouragement here given to *rejoice, and be exceeding glad*, is a further amplification of the substance of the promise in verse 10. This phrase means "exult," as if the Saviour would have the inward transport of such as were faithful to Him, to overpower and absorb the sense of all the affronts and sufferings to which they would be exposed. (Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 17, James i. 2; Heb. x. 34; 1 John v. 4, 5; Rev. ii. 10.) *For great, &c.* Here is the reason for this joy—the greatness of the reward, corresponding to the severity of the ordeal of persecution through which they were to pass. The measure of enjoyment in the heavenly state will be regulated according to the degree of labor and suffering in the service of Christ. Eternal life is a *reward*, not because God owes us it for our works' sake (for we can *deserve* nothing from Him; see Rom. vi. 23), but because by it He graciously recompenses to us all our labor and pain, even as the

inheritance of a father and all his goods are given to his son, and are an ample recompense for his obedience; yet does he not inherit them on account of his deserts, but because his father, as a father, vouchsafes to make him his heir. "It is inconceivable," says *Tholuck*, "that man can render by his virtues any service to God, any more than in taking a draught of the fountain the thirsty traveler renders that fountain a service." (See Rom. iv. 4; Luke xvii. 10.) *In heaven.* The allusion is to the future, but it is not implied that the reward exists only in the future, rather, that "the glory" (John xvii. 22), present and insured now, shall then be openly made manifest. (Col. iii. 3, 4.) How "great" that reward will be, who can tell? (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3; 1 Thes. iv. 14; Rev. iii. 21; vii. 9-17.) *For so persecuted, &c.* There is here graciously given to our weak faith another ground of joy in persecution. If our sufferings for Christ's sake are great—like those of the *prophets*—those distinguished servants of God, like their's, our reward in heaven is also great. How animating the consciousness of fighting in fellowship with so great a company of the children of light! (See Gen. xxxvii. 8, 18-28; xlix. 26; 1 Kings xviii. 4, xxii. 8-27; 2 Chron. xxii. 20; Neh. ix. 26; Luke xiii. 34; Acts vii. 51; 1 Thes. ii. 14; Heb. xii. 36-8.)

13. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.—Mal. ix. 50; Luke xiv. 34, 35.

The gifts of grace which have been received should exhibit and approve themselves. The strength which God has vouchsafed to the disciples for a high purpose must be by them sacredly preserved. Ye—who have been described in verses 3-10, and who have been addressed in verses 11, 12. The children of God, through Christ, because they bear God's truth livingly within them, are the salt of the earth—it is thus made *their* salt, just as in verse 16 it is also said—*your* light. *Salt of the earth.* Mankind, under the unrestrained workings of their own evil nature, are entirely corrupt. (Gen. vi. 11, 12, viii. 21; Ps. xiv. 2, 3; Isa. i. 5, 6; Eph. ii. 1-3; Job xiv. 4, xv. 15, 16; John iii. 6; Rom. viii. 8; Titus iii. 2, 3.) In the time

of Christ the whole world, with scarcely an exception, was a mass of moral rottenness—in a state of which animal matter tending to, undergoing the process of dissolution, is a striking figure. It will be noted that Christ calls those, whom He addresses, the salt of the earth, solely with reference to their destination with regard to other men. The distinctive peculiarities of salt are, that it seasons, purifies, arrests decay and preserves from it. (Job vi. 6; 2 Kings 11, 20.) The use of the term, in these senses, occurs in many of the proverbs and symbols of the ancients. The course of the human race, apart from Christianity, is always downward: all its civilization ends in barbarism. Christians are here characterized as a power of life. To serve the purpose of their being they must mingle themselves with society. They have a divine virtue, not for selfish monopoly, but for continuous diffusion. Knowing the truth, they are bound to make it known to others—salting and seasoning everything around them by instruction and example. Their obligation to do good corresponds with the closeness of the relation in which they stand to the individuals who are the proper objects of their Christian benevolence. The gospel must be disseminated by them through the world. Our Lord here intimates that the benignant influence of His religion was to pervade the whole earth. Only for the sake of the children of God who prevent its judgment and coöperate unto salvation, is the earth preserved, though corrupt and full of uncleanness. *But if the salt.* After referring to Mark ix. 50, in which our Lord uses the expression, "have salt in yourselves." *Stier* remarks: "In this view, whether salt ever does lose its saline property—about which there is a difference of opinion—is a question of no moment here. The question is not, can or do the saints ever totally lose that grace which makes them a blessing to their fellowmen? but what is to be the issue of that Christianity which is found wanting in those elements which can alone stay the corruption and season the tastelessness of an all-pervading carnality?" *It is thenceforth, &c.* It is certain that a Christianity that ceases to diffuse itself is a Christianity

that ceases to be real. The heart of grace, like the heart of nature, ceases to beat when it ceases to circulate the tide that is committed to it. The Christian who disgraces his religion by his conduct is useless. "There is nothing more trodden on than one who wishes to be esteemed divine, and is not."

11. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.—Prov. iv. 8; Phil. ii. 15.

The two figures by which, in this and the preceding verse, the function of Christians is represented, are not essentially different. As a spiritual salt they are to season humanity and preserve it from moral corruption, and as a spiritual light they are to be to humanity what the physical sun is to the world. Salt operates *internally* in the mass with which it comes in contact; the sunlight operates *externally*, irradiating all that it reaches. It fertilizes, guides, cheers. *Ye*. (See on v. 13.) How dark this world would be without a Christ, a Gospel, a Holy Spirit, and a Church! Light, as the medium through which objects are discerned by the eye, figuratively denotes the truth in God's revealed Word. Christians are not, like the sun, self-luminous, but like the moon and planets, though in themselves opaque bodies, receive their rays from a primal source. They are light-bearers. (Mal. iv. 2; John v. 35, viii. 12, ix. 5, xii. 35; Eph. v. 8; 1 Thes. v. 5; Phil. ii. 15.) If we have grace, it must be *seen*. In virtue of the dignity of their distinction, Christians dare not withdraw from the world. They should not merely be as lights; they should, in Christ, concentrate their efforts, so as to be one great light, for the enlightenment of the world. They should attach themselves to the assemblies of the saints, for the purpose of unitedly and openly exhibiting the light. (Heb. x. 23-25.) *A city, &c.* This apposite simile might have been suggested by some city in sight. Some think it was Bethulia, visible from the "Mount of Beatitudes," on an eminence. The cities of Judea, as well as other countries, in ancient times, were built mostly upon hills. The Church of God is no secret institution, like the heathen mysteries. Being set on "the holy hill of Zion," it should be as a central and elevated city, with its spires sparkling in ris-

ing and setting suns, seen from afar, visible to all the world. Christ's followers cannot shun the observation of those around them—they are looked at with the closest scrutiny by their fellow-men. Where light really is, and continues to be, it must from its very nature shine forth.

15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

\*Mark iv. 21; Luke viii. 16, and xi. 33.

*Candle* denotes any movable artificial light, whether candle, lamp or lantern, though the first is entitled to the preference, from long familiarity. *Bushel*. This was a Roman measure, called *modius*. 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. There is a reasoning here from the *less* to the *greater*. As in a house a candle is not lighted for the purpose of concealing it, but with the object of giving light to those in the house, so the light of the Apostles and disciples was kindled as the light of Christ, not to be covered up, but for the sake of men walking in darkness. 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. "Man's worst bushel upon the light of God," says one, "is the dealing out too richly or too sparingly the bread and pay for the ministry in the church."

16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.—1 Peter ii. 12; John xv. 8; 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

It is not said, we must wish ourselves to shine, but, as the translation well expresses it, *let, freely*, without covering or hindrance, *our light*, that which has by grace been given to us, shine according to its own nature and the will of Him who kindled it. *So shine*, by making a profession of the truth, and exhibiting, in our

temper and behavior, its native effects in making us holy and happy. As if our Lord had said, *It will of itself shine*, if you cover it not. *Before men*, as the explanation of the expressions "earth" and "world," even before the men who persecute and revile you, for this must be your only retaliation—love and truth for hatred and lies. The man who professes to value the light of the gospel must take care that he is not selfish in the use of it. He must strive to make others acquainted with the truths which he finds good for himself. *That they may see your good works*, &c., may acknowledge God as your father, and may be drawn to Him themselves in the spirit and relation of children. Our Lord refers to the *life*, because the good word without the good work is of no avail. External deportment is the only means by which men can judge of character. Isolated works or *deeds* do not properly *shine*, they are rather as flashes in the night, which make the darkness appear the darker; but the entire and persistent *doing* of all works of pure light and love is a bright light upon the candlestick. We are not to do anything to glorify *ourselves*, but everything to get glory to God. It is God who is glorified in His Saints. The holy and useful lives of Christians reflect praise on the religion which they profess, and thus cause honor to be paid to God. The name *Father* seeks to attract us, and the words, "which is in heaven," direct our thoughts to the difference between earthly fathers and this Father. The religious spirit of all nations has, by an unconscious symbolism, regarded the ether, in its depth and repose, in its boundlessness and unchangeableness, as the dwelling place of Deity. This is also the idea of the writers of the Old Testament, although at the same time they take care to give the strongest expression to the truth that God is omnipresent, and is raised above space. (1 Tim. viii. 27; 2 Chron. ii. 6; Ps. cxxxix. 7; Jer. xxiii. 23.)

17. ¶ "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil."  
¶ Rom. iii. 21, and x. 4; Gal. iii. 24.

It might appear to some of our Lord's disciples as if He intended to set aside the religion which had been taught by Moses and the Prophets, and to introduce an en-

tirely new state of things. Against this He here guards them. *Think not*, by no means be deluded into imagining. *That I am come*, not, *I am born*; our Lord therefore existed before He *came*. This is a Messianic form of expression. (See chap. xi. 3; Luke vii. 19.) *To destroy, unloose, dissolve, or abrogate. The law or the prophets*, the writings of the Old Testament, as divided into the law of Moses, or the Pentateuch, and the prophetic books, and the rest of the Old Testament. (Comp. Matt. xii. 5; Luke ii. 23, xvi. 29, 31, xxiv. 27, 44.) *I am not come*, &c. Christ did not come to subvert the authority and principles of the Old Testament, but to establish, unfold, embody them in living form, and enshrine them in the reverence, affection, and character of men. (Rom. iii. 31, x. 4, xv. 8; Gal. iii. 17; Isa. xlii. 21.) Christ came to fulfill the predictions of the prophets, who had long foretold that a Saviour would one day appear to fulfill the ceremonial law, by becoming the great sacrifice for sin, to which all the Mosaic offerings had ever pointed, and to fulfil the moral law, by yielding to it a perfect obedience, which we could never have yielded—by paying the penalty for our breach of it with His atoning blood, which we could never have paid—by giving us its full sense and spiritual import, and by writing it on the heart, and giving grace to obey it. Christianity, therefore, is not the destruction, but the completion of Mosaicism. Jesus destroys nothing but sin, which indeed destroys itself. The Old Testament is the Gospel in the bud; the New Testament is the Gospel in full flower.

18. For verily, I say unto you, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."—Luke xvi. 17.

*Verily* is the same in the original as our word *Amen*, and it was a solemn *so let it be*. The word now for the first time occurs in Christ's public teaching of the people. *I say unto you*. This formula, frequent and peculiar to the Lord, but occurring here for the first time in His recorded teaching, is manifestly one of *supreme legislative authority*, and as the subject in connection with which it is uttered is the Moral Law, no higher claim to an authority *strictly Divine* could be advanced. (See Lev. xviii.

1-5, xix. 37, xxvi. 1-4, 13-16, &c.) *Till heaven and earth pass*—an expression similar to our *till the world shall end*. The expression was the same as saying *it will never take place*. (See Luke xvi. 17.) It was a received opinion among the Jews that the earth would never be totally destroyed, but would, at some time, be renovated, and in this renewed form exist forever. The *jot* was the *yod*, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The *ittle* was the term for the point by which very similar Hebrew letters were distinguished from each other. Thus our Lord means to express, in addition to the *eternal obligation*, the *boundless extent* of the moral law, and to indicate that the most delicate and apparently smallest determinations and distinctions are to be preserved in the delicate and finer outlines of spiritual life. *From the Law*. The Law is only now mentioned, but its connection with what has gone before shows that it embraces also the Prophets. (See Luke xvi. 16, 17.) *Till all be fulfilled*—till all things which the Law requires or foretells shall be effected; till the whole design of the Law be accomplished, its promises fulfilled, its threatenings performed, and its precepts honored either by obedience or by punishment for disobedience. (Ps. cxix. 89; Isa. xl. 8; Luke xvi. 17, xxi. 33.) 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.

19. \*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.—James ii. 10.

As the connection with verse 20 shows, there is here a special allusion to the Jewish teachers of the law. The Pharisees understood not that the law is a living whole. (James ii. 10.) *Shall break one of these least commandments*, rather, “dissolve,” “annul,” or “make invalid,” neglecting, or transgressing, as if the offense was one of small importance, and would be followed with impunity. The scribes, who thought themselves *great*, used to break them. This does not refer to the coming short of keeping God’s law, of which all are guilty, and which fills the pious soul with sorrow

and contrition, but to a wanton, willful disregard of its claims. The Saviour did not, in His own judgment, apply the word *least* to any of the divine commands, but here adopted the method of speaking which was common among the scribes and Pharisees, who made frivolous distinctions between small and great commandments. As all the law is enacted by divine authority, no part of it can be of small obligation, though some parts may respect *matters* more important than others. *And shall teach men so*—*And*—not *or*, because *teachers* are the main subject. If to violate, with purpose, a known law of God, is a dangerous sin, how much deeper the danger of leading others to sin, by a spurious, enervating exposition of that law which *teaches* it as something unimportant! *He shall be called least*, &c. Views of truth which verge in the least toward antinomianism are utterly inconsistent with the true doctrine of Christ. The Saviour did not say, such a person may be admitted into heaven, and there considered as the least in the world of glory, but that such a person shall be accounted unsuitable to be among the Messiah’s subjects; he shall be rejected from them. *But whosoever*, &c.—he whose practice and doctrine tend to induce men to keep the commandments of God, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven; however low in human esteem, the King will approve and exalt him.

20. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.—Rom. ix. 31, and x. 3.

*For I say unto you*—By way of illustration of the terrible danger of making void God’s law. Here something is proposed to Christians to excite self-inquiry. What was the *righteousness* which their’s must *exceed*, and how did it fall short? The Pharisees were strict in observing the *letter* of the law, rigorously kept the Sabbath, fasted often, prayed constantly, so revered the Scriptures as to wear sentences from them about their persons, are said not to have passed a day without reading the decalogue, never ate with unwashed hands, and brought to the sacred treasury the tithes of the meanest herbs. (See chap. xv. 1, 2, xxiii. 5, 23.) For this they



are not blamed. Rather let those take warning who have not even this outward righteousness. What, then, was wanting to their righteousness? And how must it be exceeded by that of those who are really the servants of God? They lacked that perfect righteousness which can only be found in Christ, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, by submitting to whom we are also made holy in heart and life. They lacked the conversion of the heart to God, the right spirit. What they did was directed by no love of God, no desire of pleasing Him, no zeal for His service or glory, but by a desire to procure among men the honor of superior sanctity. *In no case*—Not by any means. It is implied that if they shall have the righteousness taught by Moses, that is in the fulfilled form in which it is taught by Christ, they will be members of the kingdom.

21. ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, *Thou shalt not kill*; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment:—Ex. xx. 13; Deut. v. 17.

To illustrate His meaning, our Saviour proceeds to expound the spiritual sense and meaning of some commandments of the moral law, and to vindicate them from the corrupt and partial interpretations of the scribes. He begins with the *second table* of the law, containing duties to our neighbor, because this part of our disposition lies most open to conviction. The sixth commandment (Ex. xx. 13), which He first takes, was the first broken openly by Adam's race. *Ye*—The Apostles primarily, the people inferentially, *ye have heard*. It is not said, ye have heard that it has been read in the Law, but *ye have heard*—from the elders. *That it was said*, an impersonal form of speech, to which is elegantly opposed, *I say*. (Verse 22.) *By them of old time*. This refers not to Moses or the Old Testament prophets, but to the founders and recipients of Rabbinical traditions, which the scribes and Pharisees were now inculcating. Mark the contrast between "it was said by them of old time," and "But I say unto you." (Verse 22.) 1. In the one case it is the general unspiritual mass that speaks, here it is the highest personage—the Lord Himself. 2. In the former case, it has been said to past generations; in this, the Lord speaks to those around Him. 3. The former is a

tradition from the grave; the latter, a word of life to the living. *Thou shalt not kill*. All that the Pharisees understood by this was a prohibition of the overt act of violence and murder, a gloss which destroyed the spiritual and moral character of the law. They coupled the law of Sinai with a more criminal statute concerning the execution of a murderer (Lev. xxiv. 17; Ex. xxi. 12), and made the two parallel. *Whosoever*, &c. This was an addition, or explanation, made in subsequent times, and it proceeded on the principle, that the law recognized only actual murder. *In danger of*, liable to, exposed to, *the judgment*—the sentence of those inferior courts of judicature which were established in all the principal towns, in compliance with Deut. xv. 16. Thus the scribes and Pharisees fixed the mind on the temporal punishment awarded by the law for the crime of murder, as that which should chiefly or solely operate on the mind as a motive.

22. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell fire.

¶<sup>1</sup> John iii. 15. ¶<sup>2</sup> James ii. 20.

*I say unto you*. (See on verse 18. Matt. vii. 29.) Christ, as the law's authorized expounder, proceeds to give quite a different interpretation of the spirit and sanctions of the sixth commandment. He shows that the precept extends properly to the thoughts, and feelings, and language, as well as to outward acts. *Angry*. Anger, indulged and carried out, leads to murder, as in the case of Cain, and of Joseph's brethren. *Brother*, means fellow-man, descended from a common ancestor, and hence, in a general sense, our brother. (Mal. ii. 10; 1 Cor. viii. 6.) *Without a cause*, needlessly, inconsiderately, blindly. Anger is not necessarily sinful. (Eph. iv. 26; James i. 19.) For just cause, and in its due measure, it is just, but we are to be extremely careful not to be angry *without a cause*, nor let our anger be lasting (Eph. iv. 26), or turn into a feeling of revenge or hatred. A righteous anger, springing from holy and jealous love, is predicated of God, and is also ascribed to the Saviour. (Mark iii. 5.) *In danger*, liable, or justly subject to. This expression, occurring three times in

the verse, implies not that he is necessarily lost in these judgments, but that he stands in need of Divine grace. *The judgment.* (See on verse 21.) That this was used here as symbolical of the tribunal of Divine justice seems evident from the fact that it was not the part of the municipal tribunal to punish angry thoughts, nor, in the nature of the case, could they have done so, inasmuch as no judicial cognizance could be taken of them, when confined to the bosom of him who indulged them.

*Whosoever shall say to his brother* (that is, without cause,) *Raca.* Raca is a Syriac word, expressive of great contempt. It comes from a verb signifying to be *empty*, *vain*, and hence denotes *senseless*, *stupid*, *shallow-brains*. Our Lord does not refer to the mere pronunciation of the word, but to its utterance as the outward *symbol* of an inner malignant purpose to destroy a man's just *reputation for intellect*. To use scornful language toward others is an offense before God. *The council*, that is, the Sanhedrim, which was the highest tribunal among the Jews, and consisted of seventy-two persons, the acting high priest being generally the president. The idea of the Saviour is, that whosoever shall commit the second offense here mentioned contracts greater guilt, and exposes himself to such an increase of punishment as that it may be likened to the punishment decreed by the *Sanhedrim*, when compared with the punishment decreed by the *judgment*. (Verse 21.)

*Shall say* (without a cause), *Thou fool*—a term of the greatest abhorrence—"thou impious wretch"—folly and impiety being equivalent with the Hebrews. (Ps. xiv. 1.) It stands here as the *symbol* for a malignant purpose in the heart to destroy the just *moral reputation* of a man. Every age and every country has its modes of expressing such things as are meant by "Raca" and "Fool." *In danger of.* (See on former part of the verse.) It will be observed that there is in this verse a gradation of punishment corresponding with the three offenses enumerated. The different degrees of punishment referred to express not merely what sin was in itself as a breach of the Divine Law (for in that sense all sin

exposes to hell-fire), but how many degrees of evil there were, short of actual murder, which would endanger a man's salvation.

*Hell-fire*, literally, *the gehenna of fire*. This was the valley of Hinnom, at the southern declivity of Jerusalem, where a fire was constantly kept burning and dead bodies were burned. (See 1 Kings xi. 7; 2 Kings xvi. 3, xxiii. 13, 14; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3, xxxiii. 6; Jer. vii. 31, 32.) That the literal valley of Hinnom is not here referred to is evident from the well-known fact that for none of the offenses here mentioned by our Lord did the Jewish courts inflict any punishment. Besides, the word *gehenna* is used in the New Testament twelve times, always by our Lord, except once by James (iii. 6), and always as meaning the place of eternal torment, except here, where it refers distinctly to the valley of Hinnom, as *representing* the abode of lost spirits. (See on iii. 12.) This is the view generally taken of this word, in this verse, but many persons interpret it differently. A modern commentator, in New England, says: "According to *Dr. Bartlett*, 'gehenna' did not have in the time of Christ *two meanings*, a primary and usual meaning as the name of a valley south of Jerusalem, and an unusual and secondary, or figurative meaning, denoting the place of punishment. It had but one meaning, *punishment in the future world, hell*. The Jews used it repeatedly in that sense. Even *Dr. Alger* (Unitarian), in his 'Doctrine of a Future Life,' says that 'this is a fact about which there can be no question.' *Dr. Bartlett's* view is supported by *Prof. E. P. Barrows*, formerly of the Theological Seminary, and over, who writes to the former, that it appears to him certain that in our Lord's day the word *gehenna* 'had come in well-established theological usage—probably long before the beginning of the Christian era—to signify hell, that is, the *place of torment for the wicked*; and that this was the only sense of the word.'"

22. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: 24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

<sup>a</sup>Chap. viii. 4, and xxiii. 19. <sup>b</sup>See Job xlii. 8; chap. xviii. 19; 1 Titus ii. 8; 1 Peter iii. 7.

*Therefore*—as an inference from the fore-

going declaration of our Saviour. *If thou bring, &c.* The reference is to the bringing by the Israelite of his sacrifice to the court of the Israelites, and awaiting the instant when the priest would approach to receive it at his hands. Our bringing our gift is the presentation of any worship or service to God. *And there rememberest*—whatever you are doing, even if you have already undertaken the most holy and most necessary matter, leave everything till you have been reconciled to your brother. (Eph. iv. 26.)

At the altar of God, in the very moment when man seeks forgiveness, the recollection of offenses rises more naturally than in the noise of human affairs. *That thy brother, thy fellow-man, hath caught against thee*, has just cause to find fault with thee; the expression is remarkable, as not referring to what complaints we have against others, but what complaints we have given ground for them to make against us. *Leave there, &c.* Not upon the altar. Proceed not so far as to lay thy sacrifice before God; wait not to perform the duty of reconciliation after the sacrifice is finished. *Go thy way*, that is, to the person wronged; thus will the Lord dispense, as it were, with His own service and honor, until we have rendered to our brother what love demands as his due. *First be reconciled, &c.*—prevail on him, by suitable acknowledgments, and whatever else is necessary, to be reconciled to thee; regain his favor. *Then come and offer, &c.* The only ground of hope for the acceptance of our persons or services is the free grace of God; but it is a plain proof that that grace is not believed by me, and therefore cannot be the ground of my hope, if it is not influencing my temper toward my brethren of mankind. Our Lord here expressly guards against the Pharisaism of practical virtue, which sets the duty we owe to our neighbor above the requirements of God's worship, and supposes that *this* may be dispensed with if that misconceived charity to man be not forgotten. Where the two duties conflict, or rather present themselves for performance, the lesser is to yield to the greater.

25. \*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to

the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. \*Prov. xxv. 8; Luke xii. 58, 59. \*See Ps. xxxii. 6; Isa. lv. 6.

The sentiment of these verses is closely allied to the preceding context. They contain a counsel of prudence with regard to the management of differences, and advice to avoid as much as possible going into law courts to have them decided, reference being made to the Roman custom, by which an aggrieved person could compel the party to go with him to the prætor, unless he agreed by the way to adjust the matter. But under this counsel a more important instruction is couched. Injuries done to men, as well as our other sins, expose us to the wrath of God, our Adversary at law. We are going to the judgment. Our time is short. A way of reconciliation is revealed, and we should enter it immediately. If this be neglected, the cause will be tried, the sinner condemned, delivered to the executioner, and cast into hell. (See Ps. ii. 12; Isa. lv. 6, 7; Matt. xviii. 34, xxv. 31; Heb. iii. 7–13.) The representation of hell as a *prison* expresses a condition in which all the energies are bound and fettered. A *farthing* was a small Roman coin, made of brass or lead, and equal in value to about two-fifths of a cent. The attempt to sustain the doctrine of purgatory, or that of universal restoration, from verse 26, is vain. The unending duration of future punishment, elsewhere so clearly and awfully expressed by our Lord, as in verses 29 and 30, and Mark ix. 43, 48, is the only doctrine with which His language here quite naturally and fully accords. (See Luke xii. 58, 59.) Though the expression, *till thou hast paid, &c.*, may imply the possibility of paying, at the same time it suggests the debtor's hopeless capacity to make the payment. Seeing that the sinner can never satisfy justice, nor pay his debt (as new crimes enhance the score), he must not expect ever to be liberated. But from these words in part the Church of Rome forces the doctrine of purgatory, and a certain class of Universalists, the doctrine of restoration! The impossibility of paying the debt is the meaning which Matt. xxv. 46 and many other passages require.

27. ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ¶Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

¶Ex. xx. 14; Deut. v. 18. ¶Job xxxi. 1; Prov. vi. 25; see Gen. xxxiv. 2; 2 Sam. xi. 2.

Our Lord now proceeds to the elucidation of the seventh commandment. (Ex. xx. 14.) *Ye have heard, &c., i. e.,* you have been taught the divine law in its merely literal acceptance, as if he only was guilty of adultery who committed the act of carnal uncleanness. *But I say unto you.* (See on verse 22.) *Whosoever*, any one, even if himself not any woman's husband. *Looketh*, casteth a glance, not necessarily an intensified glance, or a prolonged look. (See Gen. xxxiv. 2, xxxix. 7; 2 Sam. xi. 2; Job xxxi. 1; 2 Peter ii. 14.) Not every glance of admiration cast upon the beauty of one of the opposite sex is here condemned. Such affection is planted in our nature for pure and beneficial purposes. But when from a sentiment it becomes a sensation, the danger commences. *On a woman*, even if not the wife of another, just as conversely Job (xxxix. 1) speaks of a maid when the married woman is also signified. It must also necessarily be understood; whatsoever woman thus looketh upon a man, &c. *To lust after her.* The particle *to* determines the character of the look: it is a look with evil desire, appetite, and impure passion, such a desire as gains the full consent of the will, and would certainly terminate in action, did not impediments from other causes arise, thus making the essence of the vice to be in the *intention*. Impure thoughts are the immediate and only source of an impure life. Our Lord here, like a wise physician, goes at once to the bottom of the evil, and checks the first movements of our criminal desires. *Hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*—the heart as the centre of life, and the seat of feeling and desire. It is here implied, if not expressly taught, that adultery in the heart is almost, if not quite, as offensive to God as the grossest acts of uncleanness. The spirit of the law which Christ thus interprets is sternly opposed to all loose and licentious conversation, all provocations to sensuality, through whatsoever sense addressed to the mind.

29. And if thy right eye offend thee, ¶pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy

whole body should be cast into hell. 30. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

¶Chap. xviii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 43-47. ¶See chap. xix. 12; Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. ix. 27; Col. iii. 5.

The Saviour demands even the utmost degree of self-denial. Two of the dearest and most precious members are specified—the *eye*, the light, the lamp of the body; the *hand*, the strength, the support, the defense of the body, its most indispensable instrument. The former is mentioned as the symbol of delight in looking (sense of beauty), the latter as the symbol of intercourse (social feeling, converse, friendship). The word *right*, in both cases, designates superiority. *Eye* and *hand* are significative of the corresponding lusts. The Hebrews were accustomed to compare lusts and evil passions with members of the body. (See xx. 15.) *Offend thee*, do cause thee to offend. (See xviii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 43-8.) *Pluck it out—cut it off.* Our Lord does not mean that we are to mutilate our bodies, which are temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19, iii. 16), but that the members of the internal organism of sin, which correspond to the external members of the body (and which might continue all the more vehemently to look, and to lust, and to strive, if those external members were actually destroyed), should be mortified as effectually on such occasions, *as if* those external members were destroyed. (See Rom. vi. 13, viii. 13; Gal. v. 24; Col. iii. 5.) *For it is profitable for thee*—for thy salvation. Not only is it not hurtful, but also it will be glorious. *That one of thy members, &c.* The adventurous figure is boldly carried out. Better go to heaven maimed, than to hell whole. *Hell*, literally, gehenna, the place of punishment in the invisible world. (See on ver. 22 and chap. x. 28.) A single lust persisted in will issue in eternal ruin. It is necessary even for those whom the Lord may know to be the heirs of salvation, in certain situations to be threatened with damnation, as the means of preserving them from it.

31. It hath been said, ¶Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.

¶Deut. xxiv. 1; James iii. 1; see chap. xix. 3, &c.; Mal. x. 2, &c. ¶Chap. xix. 9; Luke xvi. 18; Rom. vii. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

Under the head of adultery there occurred another case, namely, that of *divorce*, of which our Lord proceeds to speak. The allusion is to Deut. xxiv. 1—a *permission* which, as we are told by the Saviour (Matt. xix. 8), Moses gave the people “because of the hardness of their hearts.” This permission had come to be monstrously abused in our Saviour’s time, so that, on any petty pretext, a man thought himself at liberty to put away his wife, and thus the great intentions of marriage were in a good degree frustrated. That this was a gross and sad perversion of the enactment is evident from the witness borne against divorce by Malachi, iv. 4. *But I say, &c.* In this case our Saviour may seem to depart from the law of Moses rather than to expound it, and true it is that He took for His standard, in this instance, the original law of creation, to which it was His design, under the gospel dispensation, to bring His followers. This law, however, as well as the other, was given by Moses, and the difference between them He elsewhere accounts for. (Matt. xix. 8.) In what He now taught, therefore, He was not against the *mind* of Moses or of God, neither of whom approved of divorce, except in case of fornication, but barely permitted it to prevent a greater evil. *Put away his wife.* Our Lord does not refer to the case of adultery committed by the man, there being no occasion for it, since a woman, according to the law of Moses, could not divorce her husband. But the spirit of Christian ethics fully justifies and requires the application of the statement to the other case. *Fornication*, whoredom. Some think the word implies fornication before marriage, or adultery after it. Fornication is here designedly mentioned, instead of adultery, just as in verse 28; adultery, on the other hand, includes fornication. According to this law adultery is generally believed to be the only sufficient reason of divorce, and those who give divorces, or grant them for any other cause, come under this sentence of our Lord. Some, however, maintain that Paul (1 Cor. vii. 15), added another reason—*wilful and persistent desertion. Saving for the cause, &c.* He who for any other cause than adultery puts away his wife, is to be

held an adulterer if he marry another woman, and she, by marrying him, commits adultery, while, at the same time, he becomes the guilty occasion of adultery, if the woman, who is still his wife, marry another man, for in this case she commits adultery, as he also does who marries her. Whether the innocent party, after a just divorce, may lawfully marry again, is not treated of here. The Church of Rome says, no; but the Greek and Protestant churches allow it. The easy and frequent grant of divorces in any community is a sad evil, and tends to the subversion of the family organization, on which the purity and peace of the social system so largely depend.

33. † Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, *thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths;* <sup>a</sup>Chron. xxiii. 16. <sup>b</sup>Ex. xx. 7; Lev. xix. 12; Num. xxx. 2; Deut. v. 11. <sup>c</sup>Deut. xxiii. 23.

Another false interpretation of the law is here corrected. Reference is had to Lev. xix. 12; Deut. xxiii. 23. *Forswear thyself, perjure thyself, take a false oath, swear falsely.* (See Ex. xx. 7; Lev. xix. 12; Ps. xv. 4.) *But shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*, the things respecting which thou hast sworn, perform religiously, as to the Lord, regarding it as a duty to be fulfilled to Him. Not to perform the promises sworn to, then, is perjury (Deut. xxiii. 21; Eccl. v. 4; Nahum 1. 15), and so the scribes and Pharisees taught.

34. *But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven: for it is God’s throne;* <sup>a</sup>Chron. xxiii. 16, 18, 22; James v. 12. <sup>b</sup>Isa. lxvi. 1.

Though the scribes held in words that perjury was sinful, they did much to lessen the solemnity of an oath, and to smooth the way for this worst form of falsehood. Hence, though the oath was regarded with great solemnity in ancient times by the Jews, the practice prevailed among the people in a later day, of confirming even the most trivial statements, by an oath, considered more or less binding, according to the dignity or value of the person or thing named in the oath. They thought that if they did but swear *truly*, as to matters of fact, or *perform* their oaths in case of promise, all was right, having no idea of sinning by swearing *lightly*, and forgetting that thousands of things are true which yet it would be profaning the name of God

to swear to. *Swear not at all*—use no oaths, no approximation to oaths, in your ordinary conversation—not merely do not swear by God, but do not swear at all, for all oaths, if they have any meaning, are in reality addressed to God; all these kinds of oaths which I specify are forbidden you.

*Neither by heaven*—one of the oaths which the Jews were in the habit of swearing, and which they regarded as a trifling one, which they could violate without guilt, as not expressly mentioning the name of God. *For it is God's throne.* There is nothing by which one can swear that is not virtually the same as God's name, since all things belong to Him. Heaven is said to be God's throne, because there He especially dwells and manifests himself as sovereign of the Universe. The use of such expressions as, "upon my soul," "upon my life," and the names of God, Lord, or Christ, as expletives, notes of admiration, with bad or good wishes, or prayers, as, "God bless us," "the Lord knows," "Lord have mercy on us," are not to be used in conversation, especially when there is no seriousness in the mind, and when they are words without meaning, but not without profaneness. None of the oaths which our Lord adduces here and in the following verses are judicial oaths, hence judicial oaths are not forbidden. That oaths were a part of the Divine law is manifest from Deut. vi. 13. As evidence of the sanction which they have, see Gen. xxi. 23, 24; xxxi. 34; xlvii. 31; 1 Sam. xx. 17; Ezek. x. 5; Ps. lxiii. 11, cx. 4; Isa. xlv. 23, lxxv. 16; Jer. iv. 2; Matt. xxvi. 64; Rom. i. 9, ix. 1; Gal. i. 20; 2 Cor. i. 23; Phil. i. 8; Heb. vi. 13, vii. 21; Rev. x. 6. The indifference, if not levity, with which oaths are administered in many of our courts of justice, and on other public occasions, tends to weaken their obligation, and is matter of lamentation.

35. Nor by the earth: for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem: for it is the city of the great king: 36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. 37. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

\*Ps. xlviii. 2, and lxxxvii. 3. †Col. iv. 6; James v. 12.

*Nor by the earth*, for he who thus swears, swears by God, as such an oath is a recognition of God Himself, to whose dignity the earth is, in accordance with human

language and customs, represented as an appendage. (Isa. lxxvi. 1.) *Neither by Jerusalem*, for if the oath have meaning, it is an oath by the God who has chosen Jerusalem as the seat of His worship. (Ps. xlviii. 2, lxxxvii. 3.) With what solemn awe the Son of God speaks of His Father! *By thy head.* Among both Greeks and Romans the hand was placed on the head during swearing, implying imprecation in case of perjury. *Because thou canst not, &c.* In swearing by the head and the like, we swear by that which is beyond our control, and therefore profanely assumed to have a stability which it has not. Not a single hair, not even the color of a single hair, is in man's power. If such an oath be not absolutely unmeaning, it refers to Him who has the entire ownership in men. *Thomson* says: "These people are fearfully profane. Everybody curses and swears when in a passion. No people that I have ever known can compare with these Orientals for profaneness in the use of the names and attributes of God. The evil habit seems inveterate and universal. . . . The people now use the very same sort of oaths that are mentioned and condemned by our Lord. They swear by the head, by their life, by heaven, and by the temple, or, what is in its place, the church. The forms of cursing and swearing, however, are almost infinite, and fall on the pained ear all day long." Swearing among the Jews in the time of our Lord was also very common.

The term *communication*, which means conversation, discourse with one another, limits the prohibition to social intercourse, so that, to extend it to judicial or public doings, is unwarranted. *Be Yea, yea; Nay, nay.* (See James v. 12.) Let your affirmative communication be yea; your negative, nay. Let your affirmation and negation be in accordance with fact. Let there be no mental reservation. When you have affirmed or denied a thing, abide by what you have said, and seek not to add to its claim for belief by an oath. *For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.* The meaning is, that evil attaches to the kind of asseverations just noticed, because they indicate a want of reverence, a pledging of things which belong to God, and a kind of

imprecation. All unnecessary oaths are wrong, as proceeding from, and tending to strengthen, a principle of irreverence, a want of a due fear for that great and terrible name, the Lord our God. Going beyond Yes and No, in affirmations and denials, as if our word for it were not enough, and we expected others to question it, springs from that vicious untruthfulness which is only aggravated by the very effort to clear ourselves of the suspicion of it. The undue multiplication of oaths is a great evil. Most justly does *Sir William Blackstone* say, "A large crop of oaths cannot fail to produce a rich harvest of perjuries."

38. ¶Ye have heard that it hath been said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:"

¶Ex. xxi. 24; Lev. xxiv. 20; Deut. xix. 21.

The statute of the civil or judicial code of Moses (Ex. xxi. 24), which, in accordance with the simplest ideas of natural justice, regulated punishments according to the nature and magnitude of the offences, and which was meant as a direction to judges and magistrates, had been grossly perverted by the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. They converted a principle of judicature into a rule of every-day life, and thus gave their sanction to the gratification of *private* and *personal* revenge. Our Lord now proceeds to condemn this corruption of principle, and to show that the statute of Moses was not intended to foster a vindictive spirit, or to encourage a disposition to stern and indignant re-remuneration.

39. But I say unto you, "That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

¶Prov. xx. 22, and xxiv. 29; Rom. xii. 17, 19; 1 Cor. vi. 7; 1 Thes. v. 15; 1 Peter iii. 9. ¶Isa. l. 6; Lam. iii. 30.

Private retaliation and revenge are here forbidden. To *resist evil* is very much the same thing as to avenge ourselves. We are not, in the spirit of retaliation, to resist an evil, that is, an injurious man, one who has done us evil, by doing him evil in return. A disciple of Christ who receives a blow on the cheek should expose himself to a repetition of the injury rather than to begin a contest, even though he should be ridiculed for his want of manly spirit, in consequence of his obedience to the laws of his Lord. That there are cases in which a man may be not only author-

ized, but required, to protect his own life, liberty and property, at the peril and by the punishment of the illegal assailant, there can be no doubt; but in every such case the animating principle must not be vindictive. Men who would injure their neighbors must be resisted, lest by those very actions they should prove the ruin of themselves. The word, in the text, rendered *evil*, is supposed by some to refer to sin, and evil in the world. This is often better conquered by Christian submission than by strenuous resistance. Our Lord, in order to exemplify the *kind* of injuries to which He alluded, and show the legitimate application of His principles, specified three strong external instances or symbolic specimens. *Whosoever shall smite, &c.* This does not mean that we should court insult, or in all cases submit to it without any kind of resistance, for this was not the practice of our Lord himself. When unjustly smitten before the high priest, He did not invite the repetition of the indignity, but, on the contrary, remonstrated against it. (John xviii. 22, 23.) In this remonstrance, however, He was not influenced by a spirit of retaliation, but of justice to His own character, which, under the form of striking His person, was assaulted, and what He said had a tendency to convict the party and assembly. Paul also defended his rights when they had been unjustly assailed. (Acts xvi. 37, xxiii. 3, xxv. 10, 11.) The meaning of the precept is, that we render not evil for evil, but rather suffer injury, and that injury to be repeated, than to go about to avenge ourselves. We must leave the matter to God and the magistrate. This command does not forbid the repression of crime or declare the office of the magistrate and policeman unlawful. (Rom. xiii. 4.)

40. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also.

While our Lord showed, in the first instance, a case in which an injury done to the body may be so trivial that it is more becoming not to resent it, in this one he showed a case in which an injury done to property may also be of so light a description that it is better to suffer such an act of injustice in silence than be involved in the temptation and evils of ob-

taining legal redress. We are to cultivate a spirit of forbearance, and be ready to suffer, rather than manifest a quarrelsome litigious spirit. When the importance of the case warrants it, an action at law may be defended, but this should be done in the spirit of love, which sets the well-being of society above our private ease and quiet, and without any malice. The *coat* here mentioned was a tunic, generally made of linen, worn next to the skin, with arm-holes 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.

41. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.—Chron. xxvii, 32; Mat. xv. 21.

This relates to a restraint upon personal liberty. It was an established practice in the Persian empire that all the royal commissioners and officers of the crown were authorized to seize upon ships, horses, carriages, and even men, wherever they might find them, and oblige them to assist in furthering the public business on which these servants of the king were employed, and to speed them on their journey from one province to another. This compulsion is mentioned third, because those who did it were officially obliged to resort to such measures. The thing here demanded is, a readiness to submit to unreasonable demands of whatever kind, rather than raise quarrels, with all the evils resulting from them. Let there be no malice, but, on the contrary, a readiness to exceed the required limits in rendering service.

42. Give to him that asketh thee, and <sup>from</sup> him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

<sup>a</sup>Deut. xv. 8, 10; Luke vi. 30, 35.

This direction must be referred to a spirit of kindness and benevolence. Taken in connection with the parallel passage (Luke vi. 30), where the words "taketh away thy goods" occur, it requires a free and cordial administering to the wants of others, whether they approach us as importunate mendicants, or even attempt by violence to despoil us of our possessions. It rebukes the maxim: "I neither ask nor grant favors." It commands generosity, yet it is a suggestive, not a universal, com-

mand. It is manifestly not one's duty to give to every worthless and indolent vagabond who asks a gift, nor to lend articles to any chance comer who may wish to live by borrowing. We are, according to our ability, to administer freely to the wants of others, when, in the exercise of our judgment, they are deserving objects of charity, and even when they are not, provided they are in perishing want of assistance.

In relation to the commands of our Lord in the four preceding verses, it should be remembered that they are not to be taken strictly, but restrainedly; not so much in their *letter*, as in their *spirit*. We must be guided by the other sayings and the example of our Lord, as well as by the moral law, in applying the principle of Christian love here laid down, to every particular instance. These commands must be so expounded as not to contradict other portions of God's Word. It is obvious that a literal interpretation of them would break up all the foundations of society, and destroy all control of person and property.

43. <sup>a</sup>Ye have heard that it hath been said, <sup>b</sup>Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy:

<sup>b</sup>Lev. xix. 18. <sup>c</sup>Deut. xxiii. 6; Ps. xli. 10.

The command was given to the Jews—*Thou shalt love thy neighbor* (Lev. xix. 18); but as this injunction was not extended to their *enemies*, they thought that this was a tacit permission to *hate* them, and hence the corrupters of the law added, *and hate thine enemy*. By *neighbor* they understood a *Jew*, and by *enemy*, the *Gentiles*, hence they entertained strong prejudices and malignant sentiments toward every other nation but their own. *Tacitus*, the Roman historian, says, "toward each other they are compassionate and kind, toward all others they cherish a deadly hatred." The same thing was true of the Romans and the Greeks, for they called all other nations barbarians, and treated them with insolence, contempt and cruelty. In this general ferment of the malevolent passions, how seasonable, salutary, kind, conciliatory, was the command which follows! Our Lord, let it be observed, only interpreted a law in force from the beginning; this, indeed, is the only satisfactory view of the entire strain of this discourse.



44. But I say unto you, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

†Luke vi. 27, 35; Rom. xii. 14, 20. †Luke xxiii. 34; Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13; 1 Peter ii. 23, and iii. 9.

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, and the best commentary on these matchless counsels is the bright example of Him who gave them. (Rom. xii. 20, 21; 1 Cor. iv. 12; 1 Peter ii. 21-24, iii. 9.) *Love your enemies.* The love of *benevolence* is here required, not of *complacency*, which is due to those only of an upright character. We are to cherish kind wishes toward all man, kind. Even our personal enemies are to be embraced in our personal regards, not because they are our enemies, but our fellow men. We are to have a benignant, out-going desire for their good, and to treat them with kindness, as we have opportunity. *Bless them that curse you.* This 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. *Do good, &c.* Confer acts of kindness on those who hate you. *And pray, &c.*—pray for those 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. "This precept," says *Leighton*, "does not bar any calm way of self-righting, to which there is sometimes an obligation, but men over-stretch it, and passion and self-love domineer under this pretext. . . . . Let Julian and other atheists laugh at it, but it is the glory of Christians. No doctrine or religion in the world presses so much clemency and innocency and bounty as theirs, even to sworn enemies."

45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.—Job, xxv. 3.

How touching, how irresistible is the argument used to enforce the gracious injunction just given! *That ye may be the children, &c., i. e.,* that ye may show yourselves to be such by resembling Him, assimilated to Him by conformity of disposition, as children usually are to their parents. (Eph. v. 1.) The children of God are not to imitate the world (Rom. xii. 2), but to take the Most High for their example; His love was manifested in the most costly sacrifice for us (1 John iv. 7, 8), and it is by acting out our love in like manner that we truly confess the truth respecting the Father and the Son. *For he maketh his sun, &c.* The sunshine and the rain, the two great causes of the earth's productiveness, are made subservient to the temporal welfare of the evil, as well as the good. Here is evidence of God's long-suffering patience and unwearied kindness, and impartial love. We need to be reminded of those common mercies which fail to strike us, simply because they are common mercies. The rain often seems poured out uselessly upon barren heights, but it is there collected and made to descend in a thousand channels concealed from mortal eye, to gladden the parched up wastes below. So, too, the sun appears to waste his generous energies upon the arid wastes of the Great Sahara and the desolate solitudes of Africa, but he may then be preparing those genial influences by which God "makes our garments warm when he quieteth the earth by the South wind." (Job xxxvii. 17.) Who can say that the efforts of the Christian who aims at the good of all his race shall ever be lost?

46. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? †Luke vi. 32.

*If ye love only them which love you, what reward have ye?* What remarkable thing do ye which entitles you to any special reward? The reward referred to is that mentioned in the preceding verse, of being like our heavenly Father. The love of one's wife, or husband, or children, or relatives, is only an enlarged species of selfishness. (Eph. v. 28.) He who is destitute of this kind of love is worse than a brute, but he who has no more extended benevolence is no better than a *publican*. The

publicans, who had care of tributes and customs, were bitterly hated by the Jews, because they were officers of the Romans, and were generally covetous. In loving those who love us, there is no evidence of superior principle; the worst of men will do this. It is the duty of the Christian to be better than anybody else. "He should," says *Cecil*, "if he be a shoemaker, be the best shoemaker in the town." "Love for love is justice," says *Burkitt*, "love for no love is favor and kindness; but love for hatred and enmity is Divine goodness, a Christ-like temper, which will render us illustrious on earth and glorious in heaven. But, Lord! how do men confine their love to little sects and parties! and from thence comes that bitterness of spirit of one party toward another, and, oh, how hard it is to find a Christian of a true catholic love and temper!"

47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

*Salute, i. e.*, bestow a friendly greeting. *Brethren*; here fellow-citizens, countrymen, neighbors in the Jewish acceptance of the term. The forms and modes of salutation were observed with great care among all oriental nations. Among the Jews, the expressions employed amounted to an interceding for blessings to rest upon the person, and were such as these: "Be thou blessed of Jehovah," "May Jehovah be with thee," "peace," that is, all prosperity, "be with thee." *Do not even, &c.* (See on verse 46.) How much over civilization and the general influences of religion have improved society, Christians ought to be above the average standard of virtue around them. This should not be shown by an extra severity, and moroseness, but by an ex-

tra serenity, sweetness, love and devotion.

48. <sup>1</sup>Be ye therefore perfect, even <sup>2</sup>as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.  
<sup>1</sup>Gen. xvii. 1; Lev. xi. 44, and xix. 2; Luke vi. 36; Col. i. 23, and iv. 12; James i. 4; 1 Peter i. 15, 16. <sup>2</sup>Eph. v. 1.

These words are to be limited by the context—"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. Your love is not to be partial, but universal, like His." That this is the meaning is plain from the parallel passage in Luke vi. 36. Still, it is true that the divine moral excellence is the copy and rule of the Christian, and that nothing short of as complete a conformity to this as the limited capacities of our nature admit of, should satisfy our ambition. Perfectness, though it may not be attained in this world, is to be our earnest, constant, ultimate aim, as we keep our eye fixed upon that full-orbed completeness which is in the great divine model. (See 1 Thes. v. 23.) The *perfect* law is our rule; the *perfect* God our pattern. These last verses prove that our Lord's exposition of the law was intended both to show the people their need of mercy, and to teach His disciples the strict rule of duty. And all coming short of it, or deviation from it, is *sin*, needs repentance, forgiveness through His blood, and grace to enable us to be more obedient. We who are created in God's image, and restored in Christ, and made partakers of the divine nature in Him, are bound by the conditions of our creation, redemption, and sanctification, to endeavor to be like Him here, that we may have the fruition of His glorious Godhead hereafter. (Eph. iv. 1; 1 Peter i. 15; 1 John ii. 1.)

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1. Is this discourse of our Lord recorded by more than one Evangelist? 2. Of how many divisions does it consist? 3. State them. 4. What is said of the mountain on which the sermon was preached? 5. What things relating to the beatitudes require to be noted? 6. Explain them in their order. 7. Why should Christians rejoice? Why are they the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world?" 8. How are they to let their light shine? 9. How did Jesus "not come to destroy, but to fulfil?" 10. What is said about "one of these least commandments?" 11. What is said about "righteousness" in verse 20? 12. Explain verses 21 and 22. 13. How are we to bring our gift to the altar? 14. What awful truth is taught in verse 23? 15. What is the meaning of the injunctions in verses 23 and 29? 16. What does our Saviour teach in regard to "swearing?" 17. What; about revenge? 18. What; about forbearance? 19. What; about beneficence? 20. What; about enemies? 21. Explain "Be ye therefore perfect," &c.

## CHAPTER VI.

1 *Christ continueth his sermon in the mount, speaking of alms, 5 prayer, 14 forgiving our brethren, 16 fasting, 19 where our treasure is to be laid up, 24 of serving God, and mammon: 25 exhorteth not to be careful for worldly things: 33 but to seek God's kingdom.*

**T**AKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Having thus far explored the glosses, upon the law, of the old doctors, handed down to the rabbies of the day, our Lord now proceeds to expose certain favorite practices of the Pharisees. He passes from the correction of wrong *doctrine*, to the reformation of *life*. In this fact we have a sufficient answer to the dogma, so often and so confidently put forth, that "it matters not what men believe, provided they are sincere in their opinions."

*Take heed.* Be watchful, be on the alert. The warning here given extends to what is afterward said about prayer and fasting. The Greek word for *alms* is a different word from that which is rendered "alms" in verse 2. It signifies *righteousness* (See Dan. iv. 27; Deut. xxiv. 13; Ps. cxii. 9; 2 Cor. ix. 9, 10), by which we are to understand that same righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, whose leading features—in opposition to traditional perversions of it—is the great object of this discourse to open up. In particular it embraces the specifications of alms-giving, prayer, fasting—three relations to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbor, which are brought to view in verses 2-18, and which are frequently referred to in the Scriptures. (Rom. ii. 21, 22, vii. 12, xix. 17; 1 Cor. vi. 11, xiii. 5, 6, 13; Eph. v. 9; 1 Tim. i. 13; Titus i. 8, ii. 12; Heb. xii. 12, 14.) Thus the verse becomes a general heading for this whole section of the discourse. To "do our righteousness" is just, in other words, to perform those duties which we owe to God and to man. (Ps. cvi. 3; John xv. 8.) Righteousness is here presented in a negative character. Alms-giving is a religious duty; acts of charity are acts of justice and equity. (Deut. xxiv. 13; Ps. cxii. 9; James i. 27.) It is also here intimated that the matter of our alms should be goods righteously gotten; to give alms of what is gotten unjustly is robbery, and not righteousness.

*Before men, &c.* If we let what we do

be known with discretion and prudence, and absence of all self-laudation, our object being, that others may be stimulated to follow our example, and so give glory to our Father who is in heaven (chap. v. 16,) we do not only what is right, but what is expedient in the sight of God, and for the good of mankind. But if our object is to show that we are better than others—to gain the *clat* and notoriety which such acts would be adapted to call forth—then we inherit the succession of the ancient Pharisees—we act to get praise of men. The excessive love of men's admiration and applause is a most dangerous and pernicious principle. When we *do* give, how much of self, and how little of God is there in it! *Otherwise ye have, &c.*—if ye disregard my caution, you cannot obtain the approbation of God. You serve the eyes of men, and from them must be your reward. Act for God's eye, and God will reward you. It is here evident that actions take their character from their principles, and that nothing is an act of duty to God but what springs from a regard to His authority, and from a desire of His approbation. (Isa. xxxix. 13; Prov. xvi. 5; James iv. 6.)

2. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

*Therefore* evolves the special admonition out of the general one contained in verse 1. *Alms* are deeds of charity, or things given to the poor. With a delicate reference to the secrecy enjoined, the plural pronoun *ye*, of verse 1, is here changed to the more pointed *thou*. Christ here assumes that His disciples were in the habit of giving alms. *When thou*—child of God, doest alms, which must no more be omitted than the offering of the gift according to chapter v. 24. (See Prov. xix. 17; Matt. x. 40-42; Luke xi. 41; Acts ix. 36, x. 2-4; 2 Cor. ix. 8, 9; Heb. vi. 9, 10.) *Do not sound, &c.* The practice prevailed extensively, in ancient times, of the great and the wealthy distributing their bounty to their poor dependents, who were summoned to their houses at a stated hour, and by the sound of a trumpet; and another practice, which probably arose out of the former, of the

poor, who received those largesses, celebrating the praises of their benefactors by the same public and flattering expedient. In the East, at the present day, alms are distributed in both of these ways. In illustration of the first, it may be stated, on the authority of the most respectable writers, that the Mussulmans are in the habit, particularly at the great festival of Muhûrun, of erecting stages in the public streets, and by the sound of a trumpet calling the poor to receive alms of rice, and other kinds of food; and those who have no trumpets go to the houses of the persons they intend to benefit, and deliver their charities in person, repeating at the same time verses, containing admonition and advice, with a very loud voice, that the sound of it may bring them out. In illustration of the second, one traveler informs us that the wandering dervishes of the East use rams' horns, which are of extreme length, for trumpets, and that they blow them immediately on their arrival in any place, and at the doors of opulent citizens, to intimate that they are in want of alms. And another says, that he saw some mendicants proclaiming the generosity of a wealthy Persian, who had given them some *douceur*, in the most noisy and vehement manner, on the fragment of an old and worthless horn. This custom, which boasts a venerable antiquity, seems to have prevailed in the time of Christ; and whether the hypocritical Pharisees imitated the modern Mussulmans, in placing themselves on elevated platforms, and announcing by public proclamation the charitable office they were going to commence—or whether that ostentatious class generally limited their gratuities to those whom they knew would pay them the compliments of the horn—it is evident that the *intention* of our Lord's precept is to forbid the distribution of alms in the manner, and from the motives, of those who resorted to the streets, and other places of general and busy thoroughfare, with the express view of publishing their liberality.

*Hypocrites*, men who carry themselves with other faces than their own, as stage-players. *Synagogues*. The word here used, in the original, commonly means *Jewish*

*places of worship*; in this verse it appears to mean *collections of people*. *Streets*, not *lanes* or *alleys*, as in Luke xiv. 21, but *wide streets*. *That they may have, &c.*—applause, honor. *Verily I say unto you*. In such august expressions it is the Law-giver and Judge Himself we hear speaking to us. *They have their reward*, they acted from pure selfishness, hence have their reward in men's praise, and will not receive any reward at the hands of the Heavenly Father. (Verse 1.)

3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.—Luke xiv. 14.

*Let not thy left hand know, &c.* Mr. Roberts remarks, that among the Mussulmans the *right* hand always dispenses gifts, because it is more honorable than the other; and the figure used here is a common orientalism. Thus, it is usual to say of things which are not to be revealed—"Let not thy left ear hear that which went into the right, nor the right be acquainted with that which was heard by the left." Here the utmost secrecy possible in performing the act is enjoined. We must not only shun the applause of others, we must shun even our own. No one, not even the nearest and most intimate friend, is to know of our alms-giving, and, as far as possible, we are to keep from us the very consciousness of what we have done. We are not to reflect on it with self-pleasing, for that is the "left hand" in view. In some cases publicity in giving alms is so far from being culpable that it is necessary, useful and laudable. (1 Chron. xxix. 1-9; see on verse 1; also on chap. v. 16.) But where it must be public, our intention should be secret; we should take no delight in having the eyes of men on us. We ought also to be careful that we bestow a much *larger* proportion of our alms in secrecy and in silence, and have no other object whatever in view but the approbation of God. The secrecy of our charity is one good evidence of its sincerity. Hence the Egyptians made the emblem of charity to be a blind boy reaching out honey to a bee that had lost her wings. *And thy Father which seeth, &c.* Even in public acts of charity God sees in secret. Though the action be no secret,

the source of it is, and He still looks upon that. It is so ordered in the divine administration that the selfish soul shall be disappointed in the end, while he who seeks the good of others shall find his own. No one can by beneficent actions secure the favor of God. But if a man believe in Jesus he is accepted in Him, and being so, his offerings presented from grateful love to Him are accepted and rewarded both in this world and that which is to come. (Ps. xxxii. 5-7, xxxiv. 15; Eccl. xi. 1; Luke xiv. 14; Acts x. 4; Rom. ii. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 5; Heb. vi. 10; 1 Tim. v. 25.) The inward consciousness of integrity is itself a reward; and the esteem of worthy men, spontaneously bestowed, is a reward. But most of all will the righteous be rewarded when that takes place which is spoken of in Matt. xxv. 34, &c. (See Luke xiv. 14.)

"Every act

Which shunned the trifling plaudit of mankind,  
Shall there to wondering millions be displayed  
A monument of grace."

5. ¶ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.  
Job xxvii. 8, 10; Isa. i. 15; Luke xviii. 10, 11, xx. 47.

From sincerity in almost our Lord proceeds to sincerity in prayer. It is here assumed that every one prays who hopes to obtain God's favor. Neither social prayer or public devotion is here forbidden. (1 Kings xviii. 33, 37; 1 Chron. xxix. 10-19; 2 Chron. vi. 13-42; Neh. viii. 5, 6, ix. 3; Isa. lvi. 7; Matt. xviii. 19, 20; Heb. x. 25.) *Hypocrites.* (See on verse 2.) *For they love,* &c. It is not the praying in the synagogues, or in the streets, which our Lord here condemns, but the hypocrisy of so praying in order to be seen of men. The Jews of old observed stated hours of prayer, three of which are mentioned in the Scriptures, the *third hour* answering to our nine o'clock, when the morning sacrifice was offered—the *sixth hour* answering to our twelve o'clock (Acts x. 9, 30)—the *ninth hour*, answering to our three o'clock in the afternoon. (Acts iii. 1; see Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10.) At these hours the Pharisees and hypocrites took care to be in some public place, for prayer, to be noticed and applauded for their devotional spirit and fidelity. *Verily, &c.* (See on verse 2.) The person who loves to officiate in social worship, because he

may thus obtain for himself a character remarkable for piety among his brethren, is equally condemned by the spirit of our Lord's prohibition, as the Pharisee who performed his private devotion in public for the same purpose.

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.  
Gen. xxxii. 24, 29; 2 Kings iv. 23; Isa. xxvii. 29; John i. 43.

Private or secret prayer is evidently here referred to. *When thou prayest.* Religion is a personal thing. Our collective character, as belonging to the universal church or some particular portion of it, is not sufficient either for our happiness or safety. The very act of prayer supposes something personal between God and men. David and Daniel prayed three times a day. *Twice* a day, at least, the Christian will withdraw for prayer, and as much oftener as he feels spiritual languor or danger. *Thy closet.* In the Jewish houses there was usually an upper room devoted to retirement. "Closet" means "a place of retirement," and a term of such latitude may have been employed that we might have no excuse for omission, if we are unfurnished with a place appropriated more expressly to pious use. Isaac made a closet of the field, Daniel of the river-side, Nathaniel of the fig tree, Peter of the house-top. *When thou hast shut,* &c., *i. e.*, used every caution against being interrupted. *Pray to thy Father,* &c. The glorious doctrine of a particular providence is here brought to view. God communes from the mercy-seat with, and receives the case of, every individual Christian. God alone is the proper object of prayer. Godhead alike belongs to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, so that all having the same Godhead are the objects of worship. Through Christ we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father. *Which seeth in secret.* God is everywhere—He is in our closet—He seeth in secret as much as anywhere, as much as in heaven itself, where He reigns in full perfection. *Shall reward thee,* &c. (See on verse 3.) Secret prayer is not designed to raise a transient emotion, or lighten care by a communication of it to another, but to yield a benefit which shall appear in experience and in

the daily walks of life. For the Christian who thus prays, there will be the reward of increasing piety—his profiting shall appear unto all—he will be rewarded in the sight of angels and an assembled universe.

7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Our Lord has previously been speaking of the way in which the Pharisees and hypocrites sought in prayer to deceive men; now He shows how they thought to deceive God. *Use not vain repetitions.* Earnest, importunate prayer is not here forbidden. Intensity of feeling sometimes leads to repetition. (See Matt. xx. 30, 31; xxvi. 44; Luke vi. 12; xviii. 1, &c.) Neither are lengthy prayers forbidden. (See 1 Kings viii., and 2 Chron. vi.; Neh. ix.; Dan. ix.; John xvii.) It is *vain* repetition that is condemned—that which claims merit because of its much speaking.

As the heathen do—people not Jews, and not instructed respecting God. (1 Kings xviii. 26–29.) In all the pagan world of antiquity vain repetitions were used. Even among the enlightened Greeks and Romans it was customary to repeat their supplications a hundred times, with the view of making a deeper impression on the heart of the deity they invoked. Even the Jews themselves needed caution on this point, for it was a current maxim with them that “whoso lengthens his prayers, will not return empty,” and that “every man should daily repeat at least eighteen prayers.” The modern Jews in Barbary, says *Mr. Shaw*, repeat the same prayer a hundred and twenty times in a breath. The priests of Bhud spend whole days in repeating the sacred word “Um,” and the Mohammedans cry for hours the single word “Allah.” But the most remarkable and strange of all the forms in which the heathen observe their “vain repetitions,” is that of the Kalmuc Tartars, whose practice may be described briefly as follows: “They have praying machines, which, in the act of devotion, they turn repeatedly, and in the same manner as one would revolve a wheel. A machine of this kind consists of a small barrel about sixteen inches in length and seven or eight in diameter, covered with red velvet, and having within it a number of written

prayers. At each end of the barrel is an axle, one of which has a crank, and to it is fixed a string with which to turn the instrument. It is fitted to a frame, which is covered with cloth of a coarser or finer description, according to the circumstances of the owner. The one, of which this account is given, belonged to a Kalmuc princess, and was enveloped in a covering of velvet; and the whole apparatus was set upon an elegant little chest directly before her. When the barrel turns round, it is supposed by the poor ignorant people that the prayers go up to heaven, and the more revolutions that are made—or, in other words, the oftener the writing is uppermost—the more chance there is of their being heard. Those of the Kalmucs who are too poor to purchase, or too unskillful to construct, a machine of this superior kind, have small praying mills, like the windmills given as toys to children with us, to the spokes of which they fasten prayers, written on slips of paper, with paste or small cords. These they set up on the top of their tents, and as they are turned by the wind, it is imagined that they have a similar effect with the barrel.”

For they think, &c. *Augustine* says in effect, that our Lord’s injunction is against *much speaking*, not against *much praying*. There should not be superfluous words, but a continual pious affection of heart. We may pray in few words, or in many words; it is the heart that God looks to. As a man feels, so is he in God’s sight.

8. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Prayer is not designed to communicate information to God, nor to weary Him into compliance. (Ps. cxxxix. 2–4.) “If God knows our necessities before we ask,” it may be inquired, “what can be the necessity of asking?” The answer is, prayer is a divinely appointed instrumentality or channel through which God has chosen to confer blessings on His children. (Matt. vii. 8.) It disposes us rightly to receive and improve the gifts of heaven. It is itself the exercise of our best feelings, and by the very act we possess many of the blessings we ask. *Superstition* ascribes the reason for the granting of a prayer, not to the mercy of God, but to its own godless

work. *Unbelief* infers from the omniscience of God (in which it does not believe) the uselessness of prayer. *Faith* founds, upon this same holy, gracious, divine omniscience, its poor prayer. Thus our Lord teaches us to pray in faith, *because* God knows, before we ask Him, what things we stand in need of, and, therefore, He can inspire the (to Him) acceptable prayer, and grant it accordingly. (Rom. viii. 26-8.)

"Prayer," says *Quesnel*, "is not intended to inform God, but to set before man his misery, to humble his heart, to awaken his desires, to kindle his faith, to encourage his hope, to raise his soul toward heaven, and to remind him that his Father, his home and his eternal inheritance are above." (Phil. iii. 20.)

<sup>9.</sup> After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 2, &c. On which see notes.

In a prayer framed in the spirit of the injunction against "vain repetitions," our Lord gave a vivid illustration of the nature of Christian prayer. This prayer is found, with very slight variations, in Luke xi. 2-4. From its delivery to the present hour it has excited the admiration of the wise and good throughout the world, and down through all these centuries it has been the single golden link, running through the ages, that has bound together in one the whole vast company of the prayerful. Even the stupid infidel and the shallow scoffer have not failed to perceive its beauty, sublimity and comprehensiveness. It is little in words but great in substance, so short that the weakest memory may retain it, and yet so full that it comprehends all things which relate to ourselves or others, to our bodies or souls, to time or eternity—proper for all exigencies and occasions, as well for the last ages of Christianity as the first, as well for the private devotions of the closet as the public service of the temple, including every part of religious worship, supplication and intercession, confession and deprecation, resignation and thanksgiving, adapted to all periods of life, to all kinds of character, to all countries and capacities, and suited to all conditions, equally proper for high and low, rich and poor. The child may lip its simple sentences as soon as it knows how to pray; it comes with no less fitness

from the wrinkled lips of age. It may be taken up and used alike by the penitent in the first hour of his return to God, the struggler in the thick of the spiritual conflict, and the believer in the highest soarings of his faith and love. The youngest, the oldest, the simplest, the wisest, the most sin-stained, the most saintly, can find nothing here unsuitable, unreasonable. It gathers up into one what they all can and should unite in saying as they bend in supplication before God.

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 first three 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.

*After this manner pray ye.* In Luke (xi. 2), "when ye pray." Evidently it was not our Lord's meaning that we should use these words exclusively, for the second form of the prayer in Luke varies considerably from this. It was intended as a model rather than a mould. Highly appropriate as it is, both in public and private devotion, it was never intended to confine within the limits of its few sentences the free spirit of prayer. 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. It was intended not so much as a sacred formulary, as for divine instruction as to what petitions are universally good, universally necessary, universally acceptable, as well as to inculcate simplicity and brevity in the expression. The example of our Lord Himself, of the Apostles, of the Church in all ages, has taught us how full and varied are the utterances of the human heart when it breathes itself out unrestrainedly unto God in prayer. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

*Our Father which art in heaven.* The very commencement of the prayer assumes in the suppliant a spirit penetrated with reverence and love—a spirit which, like the Psalmist, thinks of God as the highest and best portion. (Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.) Against Atheism, which teaches that there is no God; against Pantheism, which teaches that God is not a person, but identical with nature; against Epicurism, which teaches that God cares nothing for His creation; against Polytheism, which teaches that there are many gods, and against Fatalism, which renders the hearing of prayer an impossibility, our Saviour teaches that our one God is a personal, living, freely-working God, who projects and executes His counsel, not without, but with reference to, the praying man—even a *Father*. 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. (Acts xvii. 28; Col. i. 20-22; John i. 12.) This representation of God as a 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 household. *Our Father*. The renewal of the parental re-knits the fraternal tie. Believers, in all their prayers, should think of others as well as themselves. "Every Christian," says one, "has a share in all the prayers of all the rest; he is a partner in every ship of that kind that goes to sea, and has a portion of all their gainful voyages." Though we go *alone* into the closet, we are not accepted there if we go in *selfishness and isolation*. 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. (Comp. chap. vii. 11; Eph. iii. 15, iv. 6.) By the words "Our Father" we express God's nearness to us; by the phrase "in heaven," His distance from us. (See Eccl. v. 2; Isa. lxvi. 1.) By the latter we learn God's ability to help us; by the former, His willingness to do so. Holy, loving familiarity suggests the one, awful reverence the other. The whole compellation tends to produce the right disposition of prayer, the mixture of *joy and fear, confidence and reverence*. (See Ps. ii. 11.)

*Hallowed be thy name.* It will be noticed that our first concern is to be for what relates to God, before what respects ourselves. Thus are we taught that man's needs are never to take precedency of God's rights. The first part of the prayer begins with the riches of God:

*Thy name be hallowed,*

*Thy kingdom come,*

*Thy will be done.*

The second part, on the contrary, commences with the poverty of man:

*Us give daily bread,*

*Us forgive our debts,*

*Us lead not into temptation,*

*Us deliver from evil.*

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. This petition forbids cursing and swearing, perjury and blasphemy. It forbids all lip-service, all hypocritical genuflections, all mummeries of worship, where the heart is not engaged. In it we desire that all atheism, infidelity, idolatry, impiety, superstition, ignorance, and false religion, may be banished from the world, and that the only living and true God may be worshiped and honored all over the earth, and by every intelligent creature. This, in fact, is the very petition which the Lord Jesus himself put up, on another occasion. (John xii. 28.)

10. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>b</sup>Chap. xxvi. 38, 42; Acts xxi. 14. <sup>i</sup>Ps. ciii. 20.

*Thy kingdom come.* (Ps. xxii. 28; Dan. ii. 44.) The plainest and simplest sense of *thy kingdom* is, the promised kingdom which God is one day to take to Himself over all the world, foretold by *Daniel and the other prophets*, when Satan shall cease to be "prince of this world," and the millennium shall begin. This petition implies an earnest desire that the kingdom of God may be set up in our own hearts (Luke xvii. 21), 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 in earth, as it is in heaven.*

(Ps. xl. 8, ciii. 20.) 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; see also Luke xxii. 42; Acts xxi. 14.) Nor should the knowledge of the fact that in this life, through the imperfection of our nature, we never shall do the will of God in the same absolutely perfect way as it is done in heaven, be regarded as a reason why we should lower the object of our desires, or the aim and earnestness of our endeavors. This petition is instinct with the very life of missionary enterprise, and the Church cannot offer this clause of the Divine prayer in the full spirit of its power without becoming a missionary church. There are some who see in it an intimation that our earth is to be one part, at least, of the final and glorious abode of the saints. (See 2 Peter iii. 13.)

11. Give us this \*day our daily bread.

\*Or, for the day. <sup>i</sup>Job xxiii. 12; Prov. xxx. 8.

*Daily bread.* The bread which is convenient or sufficient for our daily subsistence. (Prov. xxx. 8, 9.) 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 taught to ask "daily" the supply of the *needs* of life. (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) 1. That we should not have anxious care for the future, and 2. Because we are not warranted to ask, even of the necessities of life, very large supplies, which may serve for weeks, months, or years to come, but are, as children, contin-

ually to exercise the spirit of entire dependence on, and complete confidence in, our Heavenly Father's care. The richer sort of persons, in offering this petition, do in effect say, "Let the bread which is ours come to us this day *sanctified by Thy Almighty Hands!*" (Ps. cxxxii. 15; Matt. iv. 4.) The "our" 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 Thes. iii. 12; 1 Thes. iv. 11, 12), but another's. It shows that our food and raiment must be of God's giving—that is, honestly and fairly earned, "for," as an old writer remarks, "to him God gives bread, who earns it by righteous means, but to him who earns it by sin, the devil it is who giveth." It points also 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. "Break thy bread to the hungry," &c. (Isa. lviii. 7; Comp. 1 Sam. xxv. 11.) Our Lord does not bid us pray *merely* for the need and nourishment of the body, but speaks also of the *bread* which the Father giveth from heaven, just as in John vi. 27-33, iv. 34.

12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.—Chap. xviii. 21, &c.

This petition immediately follows the preceding one, to show us that though we have daily bread, yet all is nothing without forgiveness. In this prayer there is but one petition for the body (verse 11), but two petitions, this, and the following one, for the soul. Hence observe that we are to be more careful for our souls than for our bodies—more desirous to have our souls saved than our bodies fed. What are here called *debts*, are called "sins," in Luke xi. 4. So then sin is a debt, and every sinner a debtor. (See Matt. xviii. 23-35; Luke vii. 41.) Sins are called debts: 1. Because as a debt arises upon non-payment of that which is one's due, so we, owing to God exact obedience, and not paying what is due, come to be in debt; 2. Because, as in case of non-payment, the debtor goes to prison; so, by our sins, we become guilty, and stand exposed

to God's wrath forever. 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 our daily bread, for our sins are many and daily. (Rom. iii. 10-12; Ps. xl. 13; see Heb. vii. 27, referring to Lev. xvi. 11-15.) Nor is there anything in this view inconsistent with the perfection and perpetuity of justification. The moment a man believes on Christ, he is as much justified as Paul or John, and cannot be more justified if he lives to the age of Methuselah. But all this is no reason why he should not daily confess his sins, and daily seek fresh application of Christ's blood to his conscience. In fact, it is the life of faith to do so. The truth, "he that believeth in Christ shall never come into condemnation," instead of leading to the conclusion, "I need not pray for the forgiveness of my sins," suggests the strongest encouragement to present such a petition. (See 1 John ii. 1.) 3. That since we are to pray for pardon of sin, it is impossible for us ever to satisfy the justice of God for sin.

*Forgive us our debts*—Remit the penalty of our offenses, and hold us as if we had not sinned. (Job vii. 21; Ps. xxxii. 1; Isa. xliii. 25, xlv. 22; Jer. xxxi. 34; Mi. vii. 19; Mark ii. 7.) *As we forgive our debtors*. In Luke xi. 4, it is, "for we also forgive," &c. The word *As*, meaning *according as, like as*, is not a note of equality, but similitude, not that we equal God in forgiving, but imitate Him. It also has in a measure the sense of *inasmuch as*. 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. (See chap. vi. 14, 15. James ii. 13; 1 John iv. 18, 19.) This condition, or qualification, requires, 1. That we forgive cordially (Jer. xxxi. 34; Matt. xviii. 35; Eph. iv. 2)—fully (Ps. ciii. 3)—often (Isa. lvii. 7; Matt. xviii. 21). It is a very striking consideration that this petition is so framed that, if presented in an unforgiving spirit, it is, indeed, an imprecation of divine vengeance. He who does not forgive his neighbor his trespasses, when he uses this prayer, in

effect asks God not to forgive him his trespasses, and, if he continues in his present temper, there is no doubt that his prayer will be answered.

13. <sup>1</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; <sup>2</sup>For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.  
<sup>3</sup>Chron. xxvi. 41; Luke xxii. 40, 46; 1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Peter ii. 9; Rev. iii. 10. <sup>4</sup>John xvii. 15. <sup>5</sup>1 Chron. xxxix. 11.

As the prayer for daily bread raises us above care for *to-day*, and the prayer for the forgiveness of sins is meant to quiet us concerning the past, so is the prayer against temptation a weapon for the uncertain future. It consists of two parts: 1. Deprecatory; 2. Petitionary. The Greek word rendered *lead* is only used seven times in the New Testament. Excepting in the Lord's Prayer, our translators have always rendered it "bring into." (Luke v. 18, 19; Acts xvii. 20; 1 Tim. vi. 7; Heb. xiii. 11.) "Temptation" means "trial." God never puts evil into our hearts, or stirs it up there by any positive influence. (James i. 13.) In the former respect, our own lusts tempt us (James i. 14); in the latter, Satan, or wicked men. (Matt. iv. 3, on which see notes.) But Providence may permit us to be brought into such circumstances as have a tendency to give our 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. (Gen. xxii. 1; Job i. 11, vs. 20, 21.) "A saint's whole life (says *Austin*) is a temptation." 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 it in our own strength; that He would instruct us to avoid, and enable us to overcome, our temptations. He who would honestly and acceptably present this petition must guard against going into temptation. (Gal. vi. 1; Matt. xxvi. 41.) But when, in the course of God's good providence, and the pursuit of our known duty, we find ourselves involved in circumstances of trial, then we are taught (James i. 2) to "count it all joy"; for then, it may be humbly hoped, that the tempter beholds in us that living principle of earnestness

which it is the whole business of himself and his accursed emissaries to assail, and, if possible, to destroy. (See 2 Cor. xii. 7, x. 13; Heb. iv. 15.)

*But deliver us from evil.* Here 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. In this petition we pray not only to be kept from evil, but also that we may make progress in piety. (Tit. ii. 12; Rom. xii. 9; Isa. i. 16, 2 Cor. vii. i.) The evil we seek to be delivered from is, 1. The evil of our own heart. (Rom. vii. 23; Heb. iii. 12.) 2. The evil of Satan. (Matt. xiii. 19; 2 Cor. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 12; 1 Peter v. 8.) 3. The evil of the world. (Gal. i. 4.) 4. The evil of God's wrath; (Rom. vi. 23; Rev. xxi. 8.) The many expressions in the Psalms (liv. 5; lix. 1, 10; cxliii. 12, &c., &c.,) which speak of enemies, and pray for victory or deliverance, may be considered, in their spiritual meaning, to look in the direction of the present petition. On Christian lips, they convey a desire akin to that here expressed.

*For thine is the kingdom, &c.* Some refer this to David's doxology, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. It has reference as a plea to the first three petitions of the prayer—"thy kingdom come," for *thine is the kingdom*. Thou hast the government of the world, and the protection of the saints, thy willing subjects in it—"thy will be done," for *thine is the power*, to maintain that kingdom, and to make good all thy engagements to thy people—"hallowed be thy name," for *thine is the glory*, as the end of all that which is done for the saints, in answer to their prayers, for their praise waiteth for thee. (Psalms lxxv. 1.) It is our duty to plead with God in prayer, to fill our mouth with arguments (Job. xxiii. 4), not to move God, but to affect ourselves, to encourage our faith, excite our fervency, and evidence both. The best pleas in prayer are taken from God Himself. Praising Him is the way to obtain further mercy, as it qualifies us to receive it. Some see, in this threefold doxology, an ascription of praise to each of the persons of the Trinity. It has been very beautifully said that "when the whole number of the sons of God shall

have reached their goal, a pure doxology will arise in heaven: Hallowed be the name of God. His kingdom is come. His will is done. He has forgiven our sins. He has brought temptation to an end. He has delivered us from the evil one. His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

14. ¶ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¶Mark. xi. 25, 26; Eph. iv. 32; Col. iii. 13. ¶Chap. xviii. 35; James ii. 13.

This is an explanation of the fifth petition in the prayer, verse 12. As this is the only portion of the prayer commented on, may we not infer that Christ deemed the duty of forgiveness the hardest duty, even for the Christian? The forgiveness of injury is here made a prime virtue, yet it must be regarded as standing connected with other essential elements of Christian character, for the possession of one Christian virtue implies the possession of all the rest. The forgiveness of those who injure us cannot, we know, merit the forgiveness of God, yet He sees with complacency His own image reflected in His forgiving children, and to ask Him for what we ourselves refuse to men, is to insult Him. He has declined being called Heavenly Father by the revengeful and unforgiving. (Ver. 15.) He will conduct toward us according to the spirit which we habitually cherish. (Ps. xviii. 25, 26; 1 John iii. 18-24, iv. 20; Matt. xviii. 21-35; Luke vi. 37, xvii. 34.)

16. ¶ Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: 18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

¶Isa. lviii. 5. ¶Ruth iii. 3; Dan. x. 3.

Having concluded His directions on almsgiving and prayer, our Lord now condemns ostentatiousness also in fasting. Pride may lurk in sackcloth. Fasting is here supposed to be the ordinary practice of the godly. The main reference probably is to private and voluntary fasting, though the spirit of the direction applies to any fast. (See on chapter iv. 2.) Prayer and fasting are frequently united in Scripture. (Ps. xxxv. 13; Dan. ix. 3; Matt. xvii. 21; Mark ix. 29; Luke ii. 37; Acts xiv. 23, &c.) *Hypocrites*. (See on verse 2.) *A sad countenance*, assumed for effect. If expres-

sive of a sad heart, in our approaches to God, such a countenance has nothing in it improper; but a joyous face is more like the index of Christianity than a melancholy one, and does more to recommend it. *Disfigure their faces*—emaciate, contract and deform them. *That they may appear, &c.*—in order to keep up their credit, and gain applause for sanctity. *Have their reward*. (See on verse 2.) *But thou, &c.* As anointing the head and washing the face were the customary dressings of the Jews, our Lord here directs them to use their ordinary modes when fasting. Appear as usual—appear so as to attract no notice. All *affectation* in its minutest form is here condemned. *That thou appear not, &c.* Christ's disciples should avoid all ostentation in this duty, whether performed at home or abroad, satisfied with the acceptance of God, who is present in the chamber as well as in the assemblies of His worshipers, and will openly reward humiliation for sin, mortification of the flesh, and desires after holiness for the sake of communion with Him. There is no injunction here for absolute privacy in fasting. (See 2 Chron. xx.; also notes on chapter iv. 2.)

19. ¶ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

¶Prov. xxiii. 4; 1 Tim. vi. 17; Heb. xiii. 5; James v. 1, &c.

Some connect this injunction with almsgiving in verses 1-4. Certain it is that there can be no surer way of depositing one's goods in safety than by placing them in the hand of Him who (in the person of His poor) stretches out His hand to receive them. (Prov. xix. 17; Matt. xix. 21; Mark x. 21; Luke xviii. 22.) But it is mainly a warning against *covetousness*, of which the Pharisees were peculiarly guilty. Their apparently *good* actions having been exposed, their *wicked* practices are now reprov'd. *Treasure*, in the Oriental use of the term, denoted everything which men were want to desire with avidity, and to hoard with care: fruits of the earth, ornamental dresses, &c., as well as the precious metals. It means anything on which the heart is set, whether that be wealth, rank, reputation, worldly grandeur, friends, luxury, or what not. Foremost in the list of these are placed the

passionate fondness for fine and richly-embroidered apparel, for which the natives of that part of the world have been always distinguished, and to gratify which is often the main-spring of many active exertions, to which their habitual indolence would make them otherwise averse. Little as such a taste may be thought of by us, it is both natural and necessary in the East, where the rank and fortune of an individual are always estimated by the finery or meanness of his dress, and where the perpetuity of customs, as well as the open, flowing style of the garments, prevents that change in fashion, or alteration in form, which might supersede these at any future period, either as articles of utility or ornament. *Upon earth*, where nothing is or can be other than corruptible and transient. (Job iv. 19, xxvii. 16; Ps. xlix. 6, 10; Eccl. ii. 18.) The prohibition to amass wealth, or other goods, is by no means to be regarded as absolute; the negation is to be understood rather in the sense of "not so much, as rather." Many branches of business require an extensive capital. Parents are to gather up for their children. (2 Cor. xii. 14.) Everything depends on the object in view. We are not to make the gratification of *self* our end; if our purpose is to employ wealth in the service of God, we commit no sin in gaining it. (See 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.) In the East, treasures consisted in part of valuable apparel. (Ezra ii. 69; Neh. vii. 70; Job xxvii. 16; James v. 2.) *Moth*. Although these troublesome insects are known to us, and support their ephemeral existence by carrying on their silent work of destruction, yet they are neither so considerable in numbers, nor so noted for the celerity and magnitude of their depredations, as to entitle them to be ranked among the prominent causes that occasion the rapid waste and decay of our garments. But in hot climates, where they swarm in myriads, and almost assume the destructive character of animals of prey, there do not exist more formidable enemies to the treasures of the wardrobe than the moths; nor could our Lord have given a livelier picture of the frailty of such treasures, and of the folly of making these the objects of supreme desire, than by reminding His

hearers of the rapid and indiscriminate havoc which those tiny depredators were known to make of whatever stuffs are within their reach. *Rust*. (Comp. James v. 3.) Allusion is probably made here to the rust which gathers upon metals, and which seems to be eating them. *And where thieves*, &c., might have been more literally rendered, "thieves dig through." With us, the places where our property is lodged are generally built in so solid and durable a manner that there is not perhaps an instance in the annals of robbery, of a thief endeavoring to effect a passage through stone and lime, to the repositories of a house which he had doomed for plunder; and we are so accustomed to consider these as secure and impervious to the most dexterous and elaborate schemes of the spoiler, that our language disdains to acknowledge any other way of violating the sacred quiet of a dwelling than by breaking *into* it through the more slender defenses of the windows and doors. Of a very different description, however, were the tenements of Judea, especially in the rural and pastoral districts of the country, such as that where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered; and where they consisted of nothing but a frail and temporary structure of mud, palm branches, and tiles dried in the sun. To this day the inhabitants of the Eastern World, in country villages, can boast of no better habitations. Hence the expression, "break through," &c.

It will be observed that two kinds of insecurity and perishableness are mentioned: 1. Earthly treasures are liable to destruction in the ordinary course of nature, by animals and by internal corruption; 2. They may be forcibly abstracted. Even if we do not lose them, we must leave them. Why, then, should we set our hearts on things so transient and uncertain? Let us watch against covetousness; it is the great sin of the church and of the age; it dishonors God, and brings reproach upon the Christian name. (Luke xii. 15, xviii. 24; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 17; James v. 1-3.)

20. 'But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

<sup>a</sup>Chap. xix. 21; Luke xii. 33, 34, xviii. 22; 1 Tim. vi. 19; 1 Peter i. 4.

In heaven, that is, with God. His favor is the alone imperishable treasure. (1 John ii. 17.) Whatever of this world's goods may be sacrificed by the Christian in a strong faith in the invisible world, remains and enters into the eternal destiny of the man; he shall have praise, honor and glory in God's presence, in opposition to all that vain show before man, and that self-indulgence in which the covetous and the hypocrites found their reward. (Rev. xiv. 13.) *For yourselves*, you are a momentary holder of earthly good, and not an owner; but heavenly treasures become your own forever. *Where neither moth, &c.* The treasures are in heaven, where God reveals Himself, and where all is unfading and eternal. O wondrous love which has provided a means whereby the perishable things of earth may be conveyed away and deposited in the eternal mansion! *For where your treasure is, &c.* 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. "Whatever man loves," says *Luther*, "that is his God. For he carries it in his heart; he goes about with it night and day; he sleeps and wakes with it, be it what it may—wealth or pelf, pleasure or renown." The human heart, little by little, appropriates to itself the style and nature of the treasure to which its whole thought is directed. 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. Obvious though this maxim be, by what multitudes who profess to bow to the teaching of Christ is it practically disregarded!

22. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

<sup>1</sup>Luke xi. 34, 35, 36. <sup>2</sup>2 Cor. x. 3; Eph. v. 5.

The design of these verses is to illustrate and enforce the preceding sentiment. They show that it is of the utmost import-

ance that we form a just judgment where our treasure lies, and that we have right views of what is necessary and sufficient to make such beings as we are truly happy. The body is as a large room, naturally dark. The eye, though not the source of light (which is the sun) is necessary (as a window, as it were, to the body,) to the man deriving any advantage from the sun. If, therefore, his eye is simple, not complex, not distorted, not looking in two directions (see Prov. iv. 25-27), but looking directly forward, by the light, which is rectilinear, a true image will be painted on the retina, and the man will see clearly the object gazed at—all the members of his body, too, will enjoy the advantages of the light, and the man will know what he is doing, and where he is going. So with the moral man: truth is the light of the mind, and if the faculty which apprehends truth—if this mental eye be *single*, looking right at its object, the whole inner man is full of light, and by the clear perception, and firm belief of the truth, all the powers of our nature will be influenced, and perform their various functions properly. (Prov. iv. 20; John viii. 12; Heb. xii. 1, 2.) But if the eye be *evil*—if the man be blind altogether, or if his eyes be so distempered by any alloy of base self-interest, as to mistake one object for another, if his heart be divided between heaven and earth and he supposes that the world in any of its forms can make him happy, his whole nature is, and must be, full of darkness. The regulative faculty being wrong, all others must be so. *And how great is that darkness!*—how great must the darkness be which is thus deprived of the means of illumination! The man is in constant and fearful danger of stumbling and falling, and when he thinks himself in perfect safety, he is in extreme danger. "When," says one, "the pilot is drowned, and the light extinguished, and the captain taken prisoner, what more hope is there for the crew?"

24. "No man 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."

<sup>1</sup>Luke xvi. 13. <sup>2</sup>Gal. i. 10; 1 Tim. vi. 17; James iv. 4; 1 John ii. 15.

Here we have the third reason against indulging in worldly mindedness, the first

being given in verses 19-21, and the second in verses 22-23. 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*, according to some, was the name of a Syrian false god; others say it is a Punic word signifying *gain*. We are warranted by the original in understanding the word as comprehending everything that is capable of being an object of *trust*, or a ground of *confidence* to men of worldly minds, such as wealth, power, honor, fame, business, gay amusements, and all the other various pursuits of the present scene. 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. Every one, it has been often said, has his ruling passion. That of the Christian must be the love of his Maker and Redeemer. This must *principally* occupy his thoughts, time, attention, and heart. If there be any thing else which has gained ascendancy over our souls, on which our desires, wishes, hopes or fears are *chiefly* fixed, God is then dispossessed of His rightful dominion over us, we serve another master, and shall think but little of our Maker, or anything belonging to Him. The words *hate*, *despise*, express here the opposite of attachment, such an indifference, or dislike, as leads to neglect.

23. Therefore I say unto you, \*Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

\*Ps. lv. 22; Luke xlii. 22; Phil. iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 7.

The transition from the foregoing verses is evident. The most common excuse for men's striving after earthly possessions is, the *care* they have about the necessaries of life; therefore must this care be subordinated to the high end of life. *Therefore*,

in view of what has been said—since it is God's part, like a true master, to care for us. *Unto you*, that is, to the disciples of the Lord, the children of the Father, with all who, by His grace, would become so. *Take no thought for your life*. This does not mean that we are to make no provision (Prov. vi. 6-8; Tim. v. 8; 2 Thes. iii. 8, 9, 10; Acts xviii. 3, xx. 34), but that we be not excessively anxious—yield to no inordinate or solicitous concern or grief beyond our immediate wants, calling, or daily occupation. To take thought of a thing is a Christian duty, but to indulge in carping, irritating anxiety, is sin. Many persons are not satisfied with meeting to-day's duties in to-day's strength, but they cast the net into the unsounded future of to-morrow; they draw it in-shore, and in it are all venomous reptiles, that sting their hearts with a thousand anxieties. *What ye shall eat*, &c. Earthly care is directed first of all to nourishment and clothing. Both forms the Saviour opposes, inasmuch as He points those that are anxious to what they see in the realm of nature, but above all to the truth that He who has already given the higher will certainly not let them lack the lesser. The questions thus prohibited are questions of infidel distrust asked by a Mammon worshiper, who is called upon to become a man of faith, but is afraid he will thereby lose his earthly living. *Is not the life*, &c. Here is an argument from greater to less. Surely He who gives 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, and as the life of a Christian especially was bestowed not for a trifling purpose, surely He who has given the more valuable blessing *will* not withhold the less.

24. \*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

\*Job xxxviii. 41; Ps. cxlvii. 9; Luke xli. 24, &c.

*Behold*—observe well. By *fowls* is here meant the birds, and their representation as fowls of the air serves to show their free and unrearing condition, flying from one place to another at their pleasure. Perhaps at this particular moment birds had in

our Lord's immediate vicinity drawn His attention to this. *Sow, reap, gather into barns.* The three main points of husbandry are mentioned, all which are denied in reference to the birds, which is equivalent to saying that they use no means at all for the production of their food, but are wholly dependent on their instincts and the bounties of their Maker. *Are ye not much better than they?* The reasoning is much 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 sphere in the scale of being; you belong to a nobler order, and are designed for a higher destiny. You are created in God's image—you are acknowledged as "His offspring." (Acts. xvii. 28.) He has taught you more than the beasts of the field, and made you "wiser than the fowls of heaven." (Job xxxv. 11.) And if we consider our Lord as addressing those who are laying up treasures for themselves in heaven, the argument is still more forcible, as such persons are the objects of His peculiar love, and He has bound Himself by promise that they shall want no good thing. Will the God who cares for and feeds these birds overlook you and allow you to perish for want of food? The consideration of the world is a continual lesson for a rational creature, and faith finds something everywhere to increase and strengthen itself. The care which God takes of every living creature upbraids men with their uneasiness and distrust. Man knows too well his own excellence, and how to set himself off when he would gain the confidence of others. But he forgets what he is when he should put his confidence in God.

27. Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?

<sup>b</sup>Ecc. iii. 14; Luke xii. 25; 1 Cor. xii. 13.

*Taking thought*, indulging in anxious solicitude. *Can add, &c.* The cubit was originally the length from the elbow to the end of the middle finger. The cubit of the Scriptures is not far from twenty-two inches. The context requires *stature* to be translated *life, or time of one's life.* For, 1. Our Lord refers to the prolonging of life by the supplying of its necessities

of food and clothing. 2. It is not easy to see how the incapacity of persons, by anxiety to increase their height—a thing very little connected with their happiness in any way—is a reason why they should not be anxious about what is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their life. 3. The thing implied in the text, and especially in the parallel passage, Luke xii. 26, is something inconsiderable, whereas the addition of a cubit to one's stature would be a very great one. It is here implied that the duration of life has its fixed measure. It is not uncommon for the sacred writers to apply linear measure to time. (Job ix. 25; Ps. xxxix. 5; Acts xiii. 25; 2 Tim. iv. 7.) 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. True confidence must needs be a thing extremely rare and very necessary, since Christ recommends it to us with so much earnestness.

28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

<sup>c</sup>1 Kings x. 5, 7; 2 Chron. ix. 4, 6; Luke xii. 27.

After speaking of sustenance for the life, our Lord now speaks of clothing for the body. Having shown God's care of living things, He now shows it over things inanimate. *Consider, literally, study thoroughly, note accurately*, not necessarily as a mass, but also as individuals—observe closely as one who is a learner—not from mere taste or curiosity, but to derive a moral lesson. (See Prov. vi. 6-8, xxx. 24-31.) *The lilies.* No species of *fowl* was mentioned, but now the emphasis is more specific—the *lilies*. From the name under which this flower goes in our translation, the reader is led to transfer his imagination to that humble plant, whose head, drooping in modesty, and whose petals, whiter than the purest snow, point out to us the lily of the vale, and which, whether on the mountains or among the varied artificial treasures of the flower-garden, is allowed to bear away the palm of natural beauty. But that flower does not grow wild in the Holy Land; and, as the fields of the Levant are overrun with a species of large lily, called the *Amaryllis lutea*, whose white and golden or purple



flowers, beautifully blended, afford one of the most brilliant and gorgeous objects in nature, the comparison which our Lord makes of the beauties of the lily to the royal magnificence of Solomon, and the superiority which He alleges of nature's produce to the imposing appearance of that splendid monarch, are not more just in the truth of the natural description than in the historical exactness of the similitude. It is two or three times as large as the ordinary lily, and being variegated with the most superb tints and gorgeous hues, has something imperial in its bearing, and presents a display of matchless splendor, "surpassing Solomon in all his glory." The dress of eastern princes, on public occasions, is rich and splendid almost beyond description; and their vestments, consisting chiefly of purple and the finest linen, decorated with rows of the most dazzling jewels, and set off to advantage, as they always are, in the rays of a meridian sun, give an air of grandeur to the illustrious wearers, which never is beheld without admiration. How superb, then, must be that oriental flower, which "is born to blush often unseen" among the mountains of Palestine, although the splendor of the greatest monarch that ever sat on the throne of that country could never rival its gorgeous beauty!

Our Lord may have selected this particular plant for His illustration because, 1. It adorned the sides of the mountain on which He stood. 2. It was an emblem of Himself. (Cant. ii. 1.) 3. It is an emblem of Christians. (Hos. xiv. 5.) *Of the field*—not cultivated, not growing in the garden, but growing of themselves in the common field. *How they grow*, i. e., *in what manner they grow*. The varied colors of the flowers are, so to speak, their robe, just as it is said of man's mortal body that it shall "put on immortality." (1 Cor. xv. 54.) As the beauty of the flower is unfolded by the Creator from within, so must all true adornment of man be unfolded from within by the same Almighty Spirit. (See 1 Peter iii. 3, 4.) *They toil not, &c.*—they cannot prepare themselves their clothing. 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* (see above) *was not arrayed, &c.* The lily belongs to the paradise of God; Solomon's glory to the hot-house of art. If to inanimate objects—flowers—is granted such beauteous costume, how unworthy is the desire in man to be clad in robes of splendor, when his highest efforts will not place him on a level, in this respect, with the wild plants of the field. We have here the declaration of the Creator Himself concerning the relative glory and beauty of all human pomp, compared with the meanest of His own works. *All God's works display more of His wisdom the more they are examined.* The most exquisite articles of raiment wrought by man, when surveyed through the microscope, exhibit rudeness and roughness. But the white and purple of the lily, under even the inspection of the glass, compel us to exclaim: "This is the finger of God."

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, <sup>30</sup>O ye of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Mark iv. 40; 11eb. iii. 12.

*Wherefore*, the premises having been cited, the argument from less to greater is now stated, and again in the form of an interrogation. *Grass* here signifies herbage generally, including the flowers which grow up among the grass. In Palestine the grass withers in the course of two days under a strong east wind, when it is only fit for hay or fuel, for which latter purpose it is ordinarily used in eastern countries where fuel is scarce. *Oven*. It consists of a large jar made of clay, about three feet high, and widening toward the bottom, with a hole for the extraction of the ashes. Occasionally, however, it is not an actual jar, but an erection of clay in the form of a jar, built on the floor of a house. . . . . It was heated with dry twigs and grass, and the loaves were placed both inside and outside of it. *Shall he not, &c.* Let reason judge, if He who has done so much to beautify insensate matter, may not be expected to provide sufficient covering for His own obedient children whom He has

bought with an infinite price, within whom He has put His Spirit, and whom He has made partakers of the Divine nature. When man is once more elevated by the words *much more* above the fragile and fading grass and flowers, we discern in this a sublime appeal to faith, inasmuch as to all appearance man's sensitive, earthly life is just on a level with the withering grass. (See Ps. xc. 6.) *O ye of little faith!* The expression, "little-faithed ones," which our Lord applies once and again to His disciples (chap. viii. 26, xiv. 31, xvi. 8,) can hardly be regarded as rebuking any actual manifestation of unbelief at that early period, and before such an audience. It is His way of gently chiding the *spirit* of unbelief, so natural even to the best, who are surrounded by a world of sense, and of kindling a generous desire to shake it off. When Mungo Park, the great African traveler, was once robbed, beaten and left to perish in the wilderness, just as he was ready to resign himself to death, the extraordinary beauty of a small moss caught his eye. The thought that the Being who planted, watered and brought to perfection in that obscure place a thing which appeared of so small importance, would not look with unconcern on the sufferings of a creature formed after His own image; would not, as he tells us, allow him to despair; he started up, and disregarding both hunger and fatigue, traveled forward, assured that relief was at hand, and he was not disappointed.

31. Therefore take no thought, saying, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

Lev. xxv. 30; Ps. xxxvii. 3, iv. 22; 1 Peter v. 7.

Our Lord here resumes the exhortation of verse 25. He forbids two things: *taking thought*, or solicitude, and then, *saying*, giving open utterance to the same, because the taking thought weighs down and dispirits the heart of one only, but the saying infects others also with dependency. As meat—drink—clothing, are subjects of anxiety rather with the *poor*, than with the *rich*, that class may take the present as a solemn caution addressed to themselves. But the words convey a lesson to rich and poor alike, for as *what* and *wherewithal* indicate anxiety about the *kind* of thing, rather than about the thing itself—

*daintiness* in meat, drink, clothing, is here specially forbidden to all.

32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Here are two additional reasons why those whom Christ addressed should not be anxious: 1. *For after all these things*, all worldly goods, and earthly treasures (verses 18-21), which are included under the dominion of the world-god, Mammon, *do the Gentiles seek*—heathens—the world outside of the Jewish nation. The heathen had very obscure and incorrect views of the divine character and government. Some of them believed that all was fixed by fate; others, that all was left to chance. The one considered the gods themselves as subject to fate; the others thought that they took no interest in the concerns of mortals. With such views, how could they trust in these gods? Of a future world, they had no distinct knowledge. This world was everything to them, and it was not wonderful that they should be anxious about obtaining its necessaries and comforts, and making the most of them all. But it is unworthy of a Christian to be distinguished by a mode of thinking and feeling which is emphatically heathenish. 2. *For your heavenly Father knoweth, &c.* This is an intense repetition of what had been preparatorily uttered in verse 8, following verse 7. The stress of emphasis falls upon the *knoweth*: ye have a *living* God, *who knoweth!* But in addition to His knowing, His willingness is already secured in the name of *Father*, so that we may say that every single word in the whole sentence utters a ground of assurance and strong consolation, coming as it does from Him who "knoweth the Father." (Chap. xi. 27.)

33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

See 1 Kings iii. 12, 13; Psalms xxxvii. 25; Mark x. 30; Luke xii. 31; 1 Tim. iv. 8.

*But.* Our Lord shows His hearers how the indulgence of a special solicitude about even necessary things belonging to the present life is to be avoided—not by mere negation, or attempting simply to abstain from such anxiety and unbelief, but by positively doing something else which will immediately correct the evil. *Seek* is here

emphatic, opposed to the "seek" of verse 32; it means—make this the object of supreme choice and pursuit. *First*—before and above all else. *The kingdom of God*—the kingdom of heaven. To seek this kingdom is to seek to promote the reign of God in ourselves and others. *And His righteousness*—the righteousness which He communicates and requires. (See Rom. viii. 4; Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. iii. 5; Gal. ii. 8; Eph. iii. 7; Phil. ii. 13, iii. 13, 14; John xv. 4.) The connection between *righteousness* and the obtaining of the *kingdom* should not be overlooked. They go together. *All these things, &c.* (verse 8)—all we require for the present life, shall be given over and above the spiritual good directly flowing from devotion to God's service. This does not imply that grace in the heart will ensure the supply of temporal wants without personal exertion. The original denotes that which was given in addition to the purchase—so to speak, "into the bargain." (1 Tim. iv. 8; Psalms xxxvii. 3, 4 and 25, xli. 1, 2; Prov. xi. 24, 25, xix. 17; Mark x. 29, 30.

34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Of course we are not to understand that all care and foresight are forbidden, but only anxious carefulness, else Joseph was wrong in laying in his stock of corn (Gen. xli.), and Solomon's allusion to the ant was a mistake (Prov. vi. 6). The "bag" which contained the common fund where-

by the daily need of the Son of Man and His followers was supplied (John xii. 6), showed *thought*. *For the morrow*. The Christian should not be *careful* for even the next day. It may not arrive to *him*; if it does, it will bring its supplies, and thus "take thought for itself." The personification by which the day is represented as caring for its own wants is full of meaning. The idea is, that within the sphere of each new day new means of help are in waiting for us. In this counsel we have an expression of the Saviour's sympathy with the daily care of man. What is the use of tacking to-day's troubles on to-morrow's troubles, when we have only to-day's strength? God has not promised strength for two days at once, but for each day as it dawns.

*Sufficient for the day is the trouble* (for that is the translation) "*thereof*." And besides, thinking painfully of to-morrow does not lighten the burdens of to-morrow. Let us, therefore, do the duties of to-day, and draw from the Fountain of Strength, to-morrow, strength for to-morrow, and then we shall find that, by thus seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, to-day's and to-morrow's things shall be added to us, for He has promised it. "Life is no series of chances with a few providences sprinkled between to keep up a justly failing belief, but one providence of God."

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1. What is meant by "alms?" 2. What is forbidden concerning them? 3. Why is it forbidden? 4. What is required concerning "alms?" 5. Why is it required? 6. What is enjoined in respect to prayer? 7. What is said of the "Lord's prayer?" 8. Explain "After this manner." 9. What do we learn from the words "Our Father?" 10. What does the first part of the prayer begin with? 11. What the second? 12. Explain the petitions severally. 13. What is said about fasting? 14. Explain verses 19, 20. 15. How are we to understand a "single" and an "evil" "eye?" 16. Why cannot a man serve two masters? 17. How are we to "take no thought for our life?" 18. Why? 19. What is the argument drawn from the lilies and the birds? 20. What is meant by "the kingdom of God, and His righteousness?" 21. Explain "Take . . . . no thought for the morrow."

## CHAPTER VII.

1 *Orations against rash judgment.* 6 *Things holy are not to be cast to dogs.* 7 *Encouragement to prayer.* 12 *The rule of doing as we would be done to.* 13 *The strait gate and narrow way, and the wide gate and broad way.* 15 *A warning against false prophets, who may be known by their fruits.* 21 *No gifts or miracles will avail the workers of iniquity at the day of judgment.* 24 *The parable of the house built on a rock,* 25 *and that on the sand,* 28 *Christ concludes, and the people are astonished at his doctrine.*

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. 2. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: band with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

\*Luke vi. 37; Rom. ii. 1, and xiv. 3, 4, 10, 13; 1 Cor. iv. 3, 5; James iv. 11, 12; †Mark iv. 24; Luke vi. 38.

The judging here forbidden is not 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. (See verses 16–20; Heb. v. 14.) 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 presumptuously pronouncing on things beyond our reach—such as the views and motives of others, and acting as if our conjectures were infallible truths; or severe, but putting the best construction on doubtful actions; (1 Cor. viii. 5, 7,) 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 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. (Rom. xiv. 4, 10; 1 Cor. iv. 5.)

*For with what judgment, &c.* Such is the ordinary course of things in the present life. A censorious spirit toward others brings censure in abundance upon ourselves. And if we go on condemning in this manner till death, we must expect to be condemned at a judgment seat, from the decisions of which there is no appeal. (James ii. 13.)

3. \*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

†Luke vi. 41, 42.

*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 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 vision ourselves.

*First cast out, &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, &c.* 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. We should forgive ourselves little, and others much.

6. †Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again, and rend you.  
 †Prov. ix. 7, 8, and xxiii. 9; Acts xiii. 45, 46.

The preceding rule abates the sharp eye of wrong judging; this quickens and clears the eye of right discerning; that was for the moderate censuring of evil; this is for the prudent imparting of good. *Dogs* and *swine* were both counted unclean by the law, and are consequently mentioned in Scripture with contempt. (2 Sam. iii. 8, and ix. 8; 2 Kings viii. 13; Matt. xv. 26; Rev. xxii. 15; Prov. xi. 22; Luke xv. 15, 16.) Some maintain that one animal here denotes unbelievers; the other unworthy Christians. *That which is holy* is God's, and that it may not be desecrated, preserve it from the profane! But it has become also *our* treasure and property, if we are Christians; hence it is added, *your* pearls, partly in the same sense as chapter xiii. 45, 46, partly with a specific design in the plural form. So act for the sake of God's honor that the holy things may not be despised: take care that your treasure and the good that is in you be not evil spoken of (Rom. xiv. 16), for your own sakes, for there are those who will despise and destroy the precious *gift*, and the well-intentioned, imprudent *giver*.

The general sentiment is, that religion, in its principles and experiences, is not to be forced upon those who cannot value it and will not have it, so that it shall be brought into contempt, and its professors be insulted. But while the indiscriminately zealous have need of this caution, let us be on our guard against too readily setting our neighbors down as dogs and swine, and excusing ourselves from endeavoring to do them good on this poor plea. (See Mark iv. 33.) We have here also a warning against irreverence in regard of holy things, which may not be discoursed of in all companies, without discriminating respect had to circumstances of time and place. (Ecl. viii. 5; Prov. ix. 7, 8.) In fulfilling this direction, we have much need of that *anointing that teaches us all things*. (1 John ii. 27.)

7. † Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8. For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.  
 †Chron. xxi. 22; Mark xi. 24; Luke xi. 9, 10, and xviii. 1; John xiv. 13, xv. 7, and xvi. 23, 24; James i. 5, 6; 1 John iii. 22, and v. 14, 15. †Prov. viii. 17; Jer. xlix. 12, 13.

The connection here may be seen by supposing the hearer to mentally exclaim: If that which is holy is not to be given to dogs, &c., what hope is there for man, so infinitely unworthy of the Divine mercy? In reference to such an inquiry, our Lord proceeds to unfold the readiness of God to bestow His favors upon such as humbly and devoutly implore them. The three repetitions of the command, *ask, seek, knock*, are more than mere repetitions. There is an ascending scale of earnestness. Each of the words manifests increased importunity, so that each apparent refusal will add earnestness to the entreaty, until the required blessing is received. A man, in order to offer up a good prayer, must ask with the humility of a beggar, seek with the carefulness of a good servant, and 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." Who can tell the amount of blessedness from which we exclude ourselves by lack of *earnestness* in prayer?

*For every one, &c.* The change from the future tense (verse 7) to the present, here, is significant: "Not only shall you receive hereafter what you ask, but 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 misgiving 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. (2 Cor. xii. 7-9.) We must receive refusals from God as gifts with adoration and thanksgiving, because it is really a great gift for us not to receive that which He foresees we would abuse, and the abuse of which would incense His wrath against us. (See Ps. lxxvii. 18-31; 1 Sam. viii. 6-9 and 19-22; Hos. xiii. 11.) Sometimes prayer, though refused at the time, is eventually answered in a different and far higher sense than was expected. (Deut. iii. 23-27; Luke ix. 28-31; Mark x. 35-40; Matt. xix. 27-28; Josh. ii. 3, 4.) But the promise is far oftener

fulfilled, in the strict letter, and at once. (Gen. xviii. 23-33, xx. 17, xxiv. 12-15; Num. xi. 2; Josh. x. 12, 14; Matt. viii. 1, 2, 3, ix. 27, 29; Luke xvii. 13; Josh. iv. 49-53.)

9. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10. Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11. If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

<sup>a</sup>Luke xi. 11, 12, 13. <sup>b</sup>Gen. vi. 5, xviii. 21.

Our Lord here draws from the domestic circles of earth some precious arguments for confidence in approaching our heavenly Father. *What man, &c.* This is not the way you ever dream of dealing with your children, who depend on you for their support. "Young preachers," says *Dr. Doddridge*, "are desired to consider how much force it adds to these discourses of our Lord, that they are an immediate address to His hearers, and not general harangues, like the *essays* now so fashionable in pulpits." *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*. 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 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.

*If ye then being evil, &c.* The corruption of man's nature is here taught. This is not a comparison of the morally corrupt man with God, but rather a contrast. If men, *being evil*, notwithstanding their depravity, which blinds their judgments, makes them defective in moral purity, and tends to make them weary through re-

peated provocations, and selfish, *know how to give*, are able, understand from their experience, and have the disposition to give, *good gifts*, in reference to this life, *unto their children*, their beloved offspring, *how much more*—the difference is not defined, being, indeed, infinite (see Rom. v. 9, 10, viii. 22)—*shall your Father which is in heaven*—an essential description here, because the argument itself is one from the parental love of men to that of God—*give good things* (in Luke xi. 13, "the Holy Spirit"); thus intimating, as the terms illustrate one another, that the Holy Spirit is the best gift of God to those that have received the truth as it is in Jesus, and comprehends all things which are truly and essentially good for them. *To them that ask him*, literally, *to those asking him*—a phrase which not only suggests the indispensable condition of God's favors, but also shows the necessity of prayer as a preventive of unbelieving and excessive care.

The argument of Jesus in verse 11 seems to derive its force from these three considerations. 1. If the love of offspring be so strong in our nature, how powerfully must it operate in Him who is the Fountain of natural affection! 2. The reception of the Holy Spirit has relation to our highest welfare—our spiritual and eternal interests. 3. The influence of the Spirit, unlike any gift which a parent bestows upon his child, can never fail of being intrinsically and eternally good. It is a precious truth that this view of God, so human, so paternal, is given us by One who knows what He affirms. (Matt. xi. 27.) This great gift of the Holy Spirit, which is to be asked in the name of Jesus, be it remembered, we may ask unconditionally, and without limit—as we are permitted to supplicate for nothing else, at the throne of grace.

It is indeed better for us and our friends that some of our prayers should not be answered. "Monica, dreading the persecutions which were then threatening the metropolis, prayed to God that He would not suffer her son to go to Rome: he went notwithstanding, and it was in Italy that he found Christ." This son was Augustine, the celebrated church father, born in the middle of the fourth century, whose conversion was a most remarkable illustration

of the grace of God. We should be careful to pray for bread, not for a stone. It is better that the prayer be lost if offered for that which will not nourish.

<sup>12.</sup> Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for <sup>k</sup>this is the law and the prophets.  
<sup>1</sup>Luke vi. 31; <sup>k</sup>Lev. xix. 18; Chron. xxii. 40; Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10; Gal. v. 14; 1 Tim. 1. 5.

Therefore, a comprehensive reference to the preceding part of the chapter, yet more immediately to the close of the former verse, where the free mercy of God was set before the disciples: as if it were said, in prayer commit yourself with perfect confidence to the God who giveth every good and perfect gift, but on that very ground imitate Him in your conduct toward your neighbors. *All things whatsoever ye would* includes and sums up with most significant definiteness every individual case that could prompt the question: What is here my duty to my neighbor?—all things, small and great, seen and unseen, whether done when absent or present, and whether involving much sacrifice or little.

In interpreting this rule we are to have regard to the following limitations: 1. We are not to overlook the difference which exists in regard to the circumstances in which we are severally placed, as, for example, in the case of a father and a child, a master and a servant, a magistrate and his subjects. 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, as in the case of a criminal desiring a judge not to condemn him. 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, as if a poor man should desire that one who is wealthy should give him enough to make him rich. This rule has the following, among other points of interest: 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. The demand which it addresses to us is found in our own heart, in the shape of our demand upon our neighbor.

It should be noticed that this rule holds negatively as well as positively. 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. *For this is the law, &c.* “This is the substance of all relative duty, all Scripture in a nutshell.” (Luke xi. 13; Gal. v. 14.)

<sup>13.</sup> Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: <sup>14.</sup> Because, strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.—<sup>1</sup>Luke xiii. 24.

We have here the application of the whole preceding discourse. (Verses 13–27.) Two objects are presented; *destruction*, that is, future misery; *life*, that is, future happiness. And as only *two* conditions hereafter are stated, so *two* ways, and *two* gates are represented as leading to one or the other of those conditions. Nothing is said of a *third* course in this world, or of a *third* place in the next. Heaven is compared to a palace or a city. (Rev. xxii. 14; Matt. xvi. 18; also Luke xiii. 25.) As mention is made not only of the strait and the wide *gate*, but of the narrow and the broad *way*, we are reminded that as no one falls into the hands of Satan unless he “walks in the way of sinners” (Ps. i. 1), so no one can hope to enter into life, but by *walking*, first, in “the way of God’s commandments” (Ps. cxix. 32), and *treading* “the path of life.” (Ps. xvi. 11.) The broad way is easily entered, because our depraved nature prompts us to it; it needs no search; it is easily traveled, because it is so wide as to give scope for every variety of sinful inclination, and so many are on it as to help one another forward, but it has a fearful end. *Destruction*. The word does *not* mean annihilation, but *ruin*, the destruction not of being, but of well-being. “I am lost, *destroyed*, or perished,” was a common Attic phrase, meaning,

I am in the last degree miserable or unfortunate." If the word means *annihilation*, as some have strangely maintained, the words in Hosea xiii. 9, O Israel, *thou hast destroyed thyself*, mean, O Israel, thou hast *annihilated* thyself. It is difficult to see how Israel could have been annihilated and yet continue in existence.

The narrow way is hard to enter, because it requires to be *found*, and we are unwilling to make sacrifice of sin and self-righteousness—hard to pursue, because as the way of holiness it is in opposition to the natural desires of the human heart, and requires self-denial (Matt. xvi. 24, xix. 17, 21, 22; Eph. ii. 1-3), and because so few comparatively are traveling it; but it has a glorious termination. The one is down, the other is up, the stream; the one is in accordance with the feelings, the tendencies, and the preferences of fallen humanity; the other crosses them all; the one is the way of nature, in which the fall has left us; the other is the way of grace, into which Christ alone can introduce us.

The words "few there be that find it," contain nothing discouraging as to the number of the human race that will be saved. From other passages of Scripture we know that there are to be "nations of the saved," and that they are to form "a multitude which no man can number." It also leads us to a joyful hope respecting all who die in infancy, and in the age of millennial glory the converts to true religion will be very numerous; so that it may prove in the long run of our poor earth's history, that Satan's captives are outnumbered by the Saviour's trophies. But in our Lord's time, in our time, in every intervening age, there can be no doubt that the truly religious are, and have been, a minority—comparatively a very small minority.

15. † "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they areravening wolves.

‡ Deut. xiii. 3; Jer. xxiii. 16; Chron. xxiv. 4, 5, 11, 24; Mark xiii. 22; Rom. xvi. 17, 18; Eph. v. 6; Col. ii. 8; 2 Peter ii. 1, 2, 3; 1 John iv. 1. § Micah iii. 5; 2 Titus iii. 5. ¶ Acts xx. 29, 30.

The connection between this passage and the preceding one is striking. Would we keep clear of this "broad way?" We must beware of *false prophets*, or false teachers. (See chap. vi. 1, xvi. 6, xxiv. 4; Luke

xii. 1, 15 and 16.) They will arise. They began in the days of the Apostles. Even then the seeds of error were sown. They have appeared continually ever since. We must be prepared for them, and be on our guard. They will come wrapping error in truth's mantle, saying that the way is not narrow, &c., yet there is ever something to a discerning eye that will readily discover them. It is the neglect of the Bible (Ps. cxix. 105) which makes so many a prey to the first false teacher whom they hear. He who truly seeks God trusts no guide until sure that he will lead to God.

16. †Ye shall know them by their fruits. ‡Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? §Verse 20, chapter xii. ¶Jer. xl. 19; Luke vi. 43, 44.

As men can always determine the nature of the tree or bush, not by its appearance, leaves or blossoms, but by its fruit, 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. The guise of hypocrisy will sooner or later be seen through, notwithstanding their pretences are as specious as the berries of thorns are like grapes, and the heads of thistles are like figs. What is true of public teachers is equally so of private individuals.

17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.—Jer. xl. 19; chapter xii. 33.

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. While a tree continues good or evil, its fruit must be strictly corresponding. As the corruption of the tree lies back of the evil fruit, so the corruption of the man's nature lies back of his evil doings; hence depravity lies not, as some teach, merely in the *actions*, but in the *nature back of the actions*. To become good, the branch must be united to, and abide in the vine. (John xv. 4-6, and see on verse 19.)

19. †Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

‡Chapter iii. 10; Luke iii. 9; John xv. 2, 6.

Each fruitless tree, each impenitent individual, that *bringeth not forth good fruit*—that



is, right or acceptable to God, and salutary, useful, to the doer and to others—is *hewn down*—that is, *cut out*, cut up by the root (see Rom. ii. 24)—*and cast into the fire*, a description of the element made use of to consume the tree, and representing, as a figure, the wrath of God, or its ruinous effect upon the unforgiven sinner. (Comp. 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. 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 (John xvii. 14); sinners are represented as *condemned already*, and Christians are spoken of as *already glorified*. (Eph. ii. 6; Heb. xii. 22, 23.) 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. The neglects of duty are as dangerous and destructive as the positive acts of sin.

20. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.

Some regard this as an emphatic repetition of what is said in verse 16. According to others, the intimation also lies in the words (in accordance with the "every" of verses 17, 19,)—by their fruits will *ye* be known, even as *ye* know others. This is the *verification* of discipleship before *men* in the time of the *present life*—the shining before men (Chap. v. 14, 16); and with it the transition is strikingly made to the impressive sequel.

Hence, we may learn, that our Lord expects from His people such knowledge of the Scriptures that they can discern truth from falsehood; and such diligence, as to search the Scriptures, whether the things their teachers utter be according to them or not (Acts xvii. 11); not taking Divine truths on trust, nor believing on the mere word of a teacher, using *teachers* not as dictators, but only as *helpers of their faith*. (See 1 John iv. 1-3.)

"There is," says *Dr. Chalmers*, "a principle and a cause within for all our actions without; the former related to the latter as the root of a tree is to its fruits, or as a foundation to the building which rises from it. O God, put the right principle within me,

that I may be rooted and grounded in the faith—forgetting not that while justified by faith I am judged by works. And may these sayings of Christ sink deep into my heart. May I feel and recognize His authority in reading, as the men of that day did in hearing, Him; and enable me to discern even on the face of His written word the signatures of that wisdom and weight which distinguish Him from all other teachers."

21. † Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

† 1 Jos. viii. 2; Chap. xxv. 11, 12; Luke vi. 46 and xiii. 25; Acts xix. 13; Rom. ii. 13; James i. 22.

*Not every one.* Our Lord takes a farther step toward the time of final discrimination. He turns from false prophets to false professors, from unsound teachers to unsound hearers. 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 acknowledgement of our submission in mind and heart to Christ Jesus, is a solemn duty; but such profession, by itself, is not enough for the purpose of salvation, it must be connected with faith and obedience.

*But he that doeth, &c.*, that will which it had been the great object of this discourse to set forth. To do the will of God is sincerely to seek to please Him from love to His name. (Heb. xiii. 20, 21.) Yet our Lord says warily, not "the will of your Father," but "of *My* Father," thus claiming a relationship to His Father with which His disciples might not intermeddle, and which He never lets down. And He so speaks here, to give authority to His asseverations. It is not the man who indulges in a few pious and devotional forms of speech, or who can make the most beautiful prayers, that will be saved, but it is he who not only knows, but does, whose conduct is his creed, whose character is the test of his relationship, and who shows that he belongs to Christ by having the spirit, wearing the livery, doing the works, and walking in the ways of Christ. (See 1 Sam. xv. 22; Hos. vi. 6; John xiv. 15, 21, 23, xv. 10, 14; 1 John v. 3, &c.)

22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

<sup>1</sup>Num. xxiv. 4; John xl. 51; 1 Cor. xiii. 2. <sup>2</sup>Chap. xxv. 12; Luke xii. 25, 27; 2 Tim. ii. 19. <sup>3</sup>Ps. v. 5, vi. 8 Chap. xxv. 41.

Here the solemn fact is announced, that at the judgment day *many* will appear at that tribunal, not merely the many who run with a wicked world, but many even of those who appeared to honor Christ, amazed at the possibility of their own rejection. The form of dialogue is used here, as in Matt. xxv. 34-46, to make the scene more vivid and forcible. *Say to me*—Christ thus reveals Himself as the *Judge* of men—even as the Son of God. *In that day*—the great and terrible day of Christ, when He shall come “in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark viii. 38.) This day is frequently so spoken of by our Lord and His Apostles—as if always occupying so conspicuous a place in the sphere of their mental vision as to make a further description superfluous. (See Luke x. 12; 2 Thes. i. 10; 2 Tim. i. 12, 18, iv. 8.) *Lord, Lord*, showing the earnestness of their appeal. *Have we not prophesied in thy name?* &c. Observe the self-glorifying way in which they vindicate their own merits, as the unholy are wont to do (Ch. xxv. 24), and their vain imagination, even to the last, that they shall find acceptance.

*Then will I profess*, &c. As it seems impossible that the persons referred to should continue, during the period of their separate existence in the unseen world (for the hope of the nominal, formal, hypocritical professors of Christianity, must perish at death), we are to consider the words just as a striking and picturesque statement of the truth, that multitudes of men, who made a profession of Christianity, and who were even possessed of the supernatural gifts by which the primitive age of that religion was distinguished, and who flattered themselves to the last that they would be saved, shall, in consequence of their not having done the will of Christ's Father in heaven, be shut out from all participation in the happiness of the genuine followers of Christ, and a clear demonstration then given that *He* never considered them as belonging to that class. God

may choose to bestow spiritual gifts upon unholy men, just as He often gives them genius and mental power, but such intellectual endowments are by no means necessarily connected with moral worth, or Christian character.

24. ¶ Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.—Luke vi. 47, &c.

*Therefore*—a fit conclusion of the discourse, and practical application of it. We are here taught how vastly important it is that we “be not forgetful hearers, but *doers* of the Word.” 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 here described not only listens to them, and understands their meaning, but believes them (Rom. iii. 27), learns to think, feel and act according to them, and through them, thus understood and believed, repents, changes his mind, is “converted,” radically changed, is “born again,” becomes “a new creature,” being “transformed by the renewing of his mind.” *Unto a wise man*, &c. This man has wisely thought over the plan beforehand, seen the amount of expenditure it would require, and he is now *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. 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.

*Upon a rock*. This indicates the solidity of the work. The man built, not on his own conjectures and reasonings, nor those of other men, but on “the true and faithful sayings of God,” in which Christ is represented as “the Lord, our strength and righteousness.”

*And the rain descended*, &c. 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. 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.) In "the day of the Lord Jesus," the tempests 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."

23. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: 27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

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. *He that heareth, and doeth not*, professes to believe Christ's words, and declares his determination to obey them, but fails to do so. *Built his house upon the sand*—was satisfied to begin his building "on the earth," just as he found it, or with lifting a spadeful here and there, but did not toil and labor, descending deeper and deeper through the soil. The building he erected was not

based upon Christ the foundation consisted of false principles, and the edifice corresponded with it. The study of piety should not be superficial, but a principle well founded and deeply rooted in the heart. *And the rain, &c.* This "foolish" man's building was tested as well as that of the "wise man." Character and hopes must be subjected to the trial of the Divine judgment. *And immediately it fell, &c.* 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 flattered himself with vain hopes. (See Luke xvi. 15.)

Thus ends the Sermon on the Mount. Such a sermon was never preached before. Such a sermon has never been preached since. Let us see that it has a deep and lasting influence on our own souls. It is addressed to us as well as to those who first heard it. We are they who shall have to give account of its heart-searching lessons. It is no light matter what we think of them. The word that Jesus has spoken, "the same shall judge us in the last day." (John xii. 48.)

23. And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

<sup>a</sup>Chapter xiii. 34; Mark i. 22, vi. 2; Luke iv. 32.

*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 he taught, &c.* 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. Moses and the prophets had said, "Thus saith the Lord;" but our Saviour's word was, "I say unto you." Being the Master of Law, He uttered things which were above the Law, changing the letter to the truth, and the figures to the spiritual meaning. There was something in the manner of Christ which awed and impressed beholders to a remarkable extent. (See Mark i. 22, xi. 18; Luke iv. 15.) It is one thing to admire the preacher, but another and quite a different thing to believe the truth he proclaims.

1. What is said about judging? 2. What is the "hypocrite" commanded to do? 3. Explain "Give not that which is holy," &c. 4. What does our Lord teach concerning prayer? 5. What rule is to govern us in our conduct toward men? 6. What is said of the strait gate? What of the wide gate? 7. Why are we to beware of false prophets? 8. How are we to know them? 9. Who shall enter into the kingdom of heaven? 10. What will many say to Christ on the judgment day? 11. Who is likened to a "wise man?" 12. Who to a "foolish man?" 13. What was the effect produced by Christ's teaching?

## CHAPTER VIII.

2. *Christ cleanseth the leper, 5 healeth the centurion's servant, 14 Peter's mother in law, 16 and many other diseased; 18 sheweth how he is to be followed: 25 stilleth the tempest on the sea, 28 driveth the devils out of two men possessed, 31 and suffereth them to go into the swine.*

WHEN he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

After the portraiture given of Jesus as a teacher, the Evangelist proceeds to describe Him as a worker of miracles. *Great multitudes, &c.* The numbers of those who descended with Him were swelled by accessions, after they reached the plain. Though Christ was a Lawgiver, so strict, and so faithful as a Reformer, the people diligently attended on Him.

2. \*And behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.—<sup>a</sup>Mark i. 40, &c.; Luke v. 12, &c.

*A leper.* 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 is still to be found in some parts of the world. There is said to be a small island on the coast of South Africa, near the Cape of Good Hope, which is appropriated by the Colonial government to lepers.

*Worshipped Him.* In token of civil respect, or as an act of religious homage.

*Saying, Lord, &c.* The leper expressed the profoundest reverence and most earnest importunity. There was here no questioning of Christ's power, of his unbelief who said, "If thou canst," &c. (Mark ix. 22.) *Wilt* 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 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."

There are gradations in faith. In *this* case we have the example of it in a nascent and imperfect form—as a grain of mustard seed. In the history of the second case here recorded (verse 8), we have it in far greater strength and maturity. In the former the man believed in the power, but doubted the will of Christ to heal him. In the latter case the man believed that Christ might cure the patient who stood before Him; but more than this—believed that His word would be alike effectual, though the patient were at a distance and out of sight. His was a faith not helped by the full accompaniments of sense, and which subsisted on itself alone.

3. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.—<sup>b</sup>2 Kings v. 11.

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 earth, but retains unscathed his own purity and splendor. *Put forth, &c.* This 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, &c.* Jesus 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. This is the saying of God—and God only—the saying of Him whose almighty will is the cause of all things. The

cures which His servants wrought were in the name of *another*, but Christ's were in *His own name*, and by *His own will*. (See Gen. xli. 16; 2 King v. 7; Acts iii. 6.)

*And immediately, &c.* The effect, as usual, was instantaneous; the man was cleansed or purified, both in a physical and moral sense. What an astonishing and convincing spectacle! This action of Jesus is a representation of that *invisible hand* which makes itself *felt* by the most *insensible heart*, of that *internal word* which makes itself heard by the most *deaf*, and of that *supreme will* which *works* everything according to its *own counsel*. "To my mind," says *Dr. Thomson*, after describing this dreadful malady as he saw it, "there is no conceivable manifestation of Divine power more triumphantly confirmatory of Christ's Divinity than the cleansing of a leper with a word. He who can cleanse the leper can raise the dead, and can also forgive sins and save the soul. I ask no other evidence of the fact."

4. And Jesus saith unto him, "See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

*Chap. ix. 30; Mark v. 43. Lev. xiv. 4, 10; Luke v. 14.*  
*See thou tell no man: but go, &c.* Lest if a rumor of these things go before thee, the priests at Jerusalem, out of envy, out of desire to depreciate my work, may deny either that thou wast a leper, or else that thou art now truly cleansed. There are times when our Lord would have us work for Him quietly and silently, rather than attract attention by a noisy zeal. The man was ready to remain. Adversity transfers our affections from natural objects to Christ.

*Show thyself, &c., i. e.,* subject thyself to the inspection of a priest, and obtain an official recognition of the cure that has been wrought upon thee. *And offer the gift, &c.* (Lev. xiv. 2, 10, 21, xli. 1-32.) Thus would the miracle be fully authenticated. So long as the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, which were now drawing to a close, were not abrogated, Christ would have them respected. *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. (Lev. xiv. 2, 10, 21.)

Leprosy is an emblem of sin. 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, from heaven, and, at length, it will bring down the body 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. He is able to cure the worst cases of spiritual leprosy, even such as those of *Manasseh, Saul and Zaccheus*. The two little words, *I will*, are a deep mine, rich in comfort and encouragement to all laboring and heavy-laden souls.

5. ¶ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, 6. And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.  
 \*Luke vii. 1, &c. Job xxxi. 13, 14; Acts x. 7; Col. iii. 11, iv. 1; Phil. 16.

*Capernaum*—the center of Christ's operations, to which He frequently returned after His itinerant missions. 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. This centurion 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. The first fruit of the Gentiles was a Roman soldier.

*Came unto him, &c.* In Luke vii. 3, "sent unto him the elders of the Jews." It is usual in all languages, when the speaker or writer wishes to direct attention simply to the act, and not to the attending circumstances, to ascribe to the person himself the things which are done, and the words

which are spoken, by his order It is a legal maxim *who does by another does by himself*. My servant, &c. The centurion's feeling such a deep interest in the well-being of his servant, keeping him at his "home," instead of sending him in his affliction to relatives or friends, is a beautiful trait in his character, and highly creditable to him, especially when the temptations of military life are remembered. True religion binds the hearts of masters and servants together. It is a great advantage to be connected with godly families. *Sick of the palsy*, &c. When paralysis or palsy are united with tetanus, as it sometimes is in Eastern countries, extreme suffering and rapid dissolution are often the result.

7. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

How promptly does our Lord accede to the request! The confidence with which He spoke of healing one so near his end shows that His power to work miracles was not a derived one, but inherent in Himself. It also shows Christ's gracious readiness to bless. (Ps. cxiii. 5.)

8. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.  
9. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.—Luke xv. 19, 21. Ps. cvii. 20.

The gracious language of our Lord was *humbling* to the centurion. *Lord, I am not worthy*, &c. He was far from being puffed up with conceit of his own merit, and this, too, even though he had built a synagogue. (Luke vii. 5.) He thought himself unworthy of the presence in his house of so exalted and holy a personage, yet Christ counted him worthy that he should enter into His heart—a greater boon and blessedness. The best men have always the lowest thoughts of themselves. When we esteem ourselves unworthy of any favors, Christ accounts us worthy of all. Humility is that virtue which, more than any other, disposes the mind to yield to the evidences and embrace the doctrines of the Bible, which the Gospel was peculiarly meant to produce, on which it lays the greatest stress, and in which, perhaps, more than in any other, consists the true essence and vital principle of the Christian temper. (Luke xiv. 11.) It is the concomitant grace of faith.

*But speak the word only*, &c. He had faith in Christ's Divine power. (See on verse 2.) He thought that it was equal to that of God, who said, "Let there be light, and there was light." (Ps. cvii. 20.)

*For I am a man under authority*, &c. "I am a subaltern, an under-officer, and 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. We are now separated from the Saviour, but we can reach Him by faith and prayer. What peace we should enjoy if in all our difficulties we felt that Jesus was able to deliver us!

10. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

*Marvelled*, wondered, started in a pleasant surprise, as at the discovery of a rose in the desert, at this supernatural union of abasement and elevation, consciousness of guilt, and strong faith in a Roman centurion! It is remarkable that of the only two occasions on which it is recorded that Christ wondered, one was at "faith," and the other at "unbelief." (Mark vi. 6.) We ought to wonder less at wisdom, wealth and grandeur, than at the fruits of *faith*. This expression is one of those which show the reality of our Lord's human nature. The miracle He was about to work showed Him to be "perfect God;" the feeling of wonder showed Him to be "perfect man." 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. *To them that followed*, i. e., His disciples.

*Verily, I say unto you*, &c. 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 confidence in His absolute word, without His actual presence, thus surpassing that of the nobleman (John iv. 49) Jairus, (Mark v. 23) and Martha and Mary. (John xi. 21 and 32.) The unbelief of the entire chosen people of God was rebuked by the faith of this *stranger to the commonwealth of Israel*. (Eph. ii. 12.) How striking a commentary upon the Apostle's words, Rom. ix. 31-32!

11. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>1</sup>Gen. xii. 3; Isa. ii. 2, 3, xi. 10; Mal. i. 11; Luke xiii. 29; Acts x. 45, xl. 18, xiv. 27; Rom. xv. 9-12; Eph. iii. 6; <sup>2</sup>Chap. xxi. 43. <sup>3</sup>Chap. xiii. 42, 50, xxii. 13, xxiv. 51, xxv. 30; Luke xiii. 28; 2 Peter ii. 17; Jude 13.

Jesus takes occasion from the faith of the Roman centurion to state that this case was not to be a solitary one, that many of those afar off, and not of the Jewish nation, should be called to be heirs of the grace of eternal life. *Sit down*, literally, recline, in allusion to the recumbent posture of guests at table in the East. *With Abraham, &c.* They should become his spiritual descendants. It is not sect, nor system, nor longitude, nor latitude, that are the limits of Christianity. God has His own hidden ones, where the world least suspects them. *Kingdom of heaven*—the state of future glory.

*Learn.* 1. Heaven will be composed of a vast multitude and various descriptions of persons. 2. In that assembly there will be a perfect harmony and congeniality in character, for spending eternity in happy fellowship. 3. The assembly will not be one collected for toil or battle, but for "rest from their labor." 4. There will be a mutual recognition among all those whose relation to each other here is such as to admit of its perpetuation in that blessed state. 5. Heaven will be a feast—a feast of the understanding, of the affections, of memory, of anticipation.

*I say unto you.* This is the authority on which the whole rests. We have the testimony of Jesus, and on it we may with confidence rely. Many of the heathen are pressing into the kingdom of God; are you still loitering about the entrance? Many

of them are the subjects of grace; are you still in a state of nature? God forbid that while they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you should be cast out!

*But the children, &c.* Natural Jews, all, indeed, to whom the kingdom would seem naturally to belong—those who, by their descent and outward circumstances, might regard themselves as candidates for the blessings of heaven.

*Cast. . . . outer darkness.* The imagery of a feast, as representing the happiness of heaven, is still preserved. The expression denotes darkness the most remote from the light, and is employed in opposition to the brilliant lights which are figuratively supposed to be burning in the banqueting-room. It seems a fitting retribution that those who, when *light* came into the world, loved darkness rather than light, *because their deeds were evil*, should hereafter be enshrouded with fearful darkness and gloom. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth* is a strong image of that utter despair, darkness, and death of a soul excluded from God, who "is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John i. 5.)

13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.

*As thou hast believed*—his faith was great, and so also was the corresponding blessing. (John xi. 40.) Unbelief hinders blessing. (Matt. xiii. 58); but faith can work wonders. (Matt. xvii. 20; 1 Cor. xiii. 2.) *Servant was healed*, restored to perfect health and vigor; there was not merely a remission of the strength of the disease, but it had altogether left him. (Luke vii. 10.) *In the self same hour*—as soon as Jesus had spoken the word. (Comp. John iv. 46.) 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 those very graces in the centurion were the products of divine grace.

On this history, note 1. Our Lord's miracles had the fullest credit given to them by men of rank and character, competent to judge. 2. The profession of a soldier is not an unlawful one; it is never condemned in the Scriptures. (Matt. xxvii. 54; Acts x. 2, xxvii. 43.) 3. There is no situation

in life that exempts us from the obligation to be Christians. 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.

14. ¶ And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw <sup>14</sup>his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

<sup>14</sup>Mark i. 29, 30, 31; Luke iv. 38, 39. <sup>15</sup>1 Cor. ix. 5.

*Peter's house.* Peter and Andrew appear to have lived together. (Matt. iv. 18.) Peter is here mentioned alone for his strong personal character. *His wife's mother.* Whether his mother-in-law lived with him, or whether he received her into his house that she might be cared for during her sickness, is not known, but either shows the kindness of his heart. We should show piety at home. (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. (See 1 Cor. ix. 5.) Neither the Prophets of the Old Testament, nor the Apostles of the New, judged themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. (See Gen. ii. 18; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Heb. xiii. 4.)

*Laid, and sick of a fever.* In Tabiga, the great manufacturing suburb of Capernaum, where Peter's wife's mother lay sick, and about which there is considerable marshy land, "Feyers," says *Dr. Thompson*, "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 Butailha, at the influx of the Jordan."

*He touched her hand, i. e.,* took her by the hand. Luke says that he "rebuked" the disorder, so that perhaps He also spoke. The evangelist, who adds something more, does not contradict him who says the less. This miracle did not, as in some other cases, consist in the cure of an incurable disorder, but in the *mode* of cure. *And the fever left her.* Instantly. There was not a gradual convalescence, but an instantaneous cure was effected, thus showing the reality of the miracle. We found Jesus, in the first place, at the hospital, next at the barracks, and now we find Him beneath

the roof-tree, and by the domestic fireside, healing the sick, and giving comfort and joy. *And she arose, &c.* The completeness of the recovery was shown by the fact that she at once girded herself for serving. She *ministered unto them*, or waited on them, served them, with specific reference to food. 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. (Ps. lxxvi. 13, 14.)

16. ¶ When the even was come they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

<sup>16</sup>Mark i. 32, &c.; Luke iv. 40, 41. <sup>17</sup>Isa. liii. 4; 1 Peter ii. 24.

*When the even was come*, namely, after sun-set, at which time the Jewish Sabbath ended. Thus the Sabbath (for we find, from Mark i. 21, that it was a Sabbath day) had ended, when the sick were brought, and hence they did it without scruple. It was a time when there was in Capernaum a deep stirring of enthusiasm for the Lord—when this general longing seized the inhabitants of the place, and they brought unto him their sick, especially those who were possessed with devils. The lame, the blind, the paralytic, the possessed, were brought by their friends, walking, led, supported by crutches, or carried in their beds, to the great Healer. *And he cast out the spirits with his word*, literally, *by a word, i. e.,* at a single authoritative command. *Healed all that were sick.* Some persons turn away from the view of misery, because it gives them uneasiness; but such conduct is selfish. 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.

*That it might be fulfilled, &c.* The prediction is found in Isa. liii. 4-6. The sympathy of Christ 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. It was by His substitutional suffering in our stead that He was entitled to redeem us from hell and relieve us from the earthly part of our woes. Jesus, by relieving suffering, has



left us an example that we should follow His steps. All the philanthropic means employed by individuals or by society at large for the relief of human suffering, and especially of that produced by bodily disease, are but continuations of the work begun by Christ himself. The medical profession, more especially when governed by right principles and actuated by becoming motives, bears the same relation to our Lord as the physician of the body, that the ministry ought always to sustain to Him as the physician of the soul.

This is an appropriate place for noticing several peculiarities of our Lord's miracles. 1. They were public. Some 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 broad day, in the sight of multitudes in all parts of the country, and, in fact, under the eye of a whole nation for nearly four years. 2. They were of a beneficent character, not a wild, arbitrary display of power, but all looking to some benignant result. 3. They were of such a character that if *they* were not miracles, then miracles can have no existence for the authentication of a divine mission. They cannot 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 mankind 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.

18. ¶ Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

The occurrences here narrated took place some time after those recorded in the preceding verse. *The other side.* The other side of Lake Gennesaret. (Comp. verse 28.) He crossed from west to east.

19. ¶ And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.  
 ¶ Luke ix. 57, 58.

*A certain scribe.* (See chap. ii. 4.) Came, struck with what he had seen, in the enthusiasm of the moment. *Master*—Teacher. 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. It has been suggested that this may have been Judas Iscariot, but where nothing is known silence is a virtue.

20. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.  
 ¶ Psalms lxxxiv. 3, civ. 17. ¶ Isa. liii. 3; 1 Cor. viii. 9.

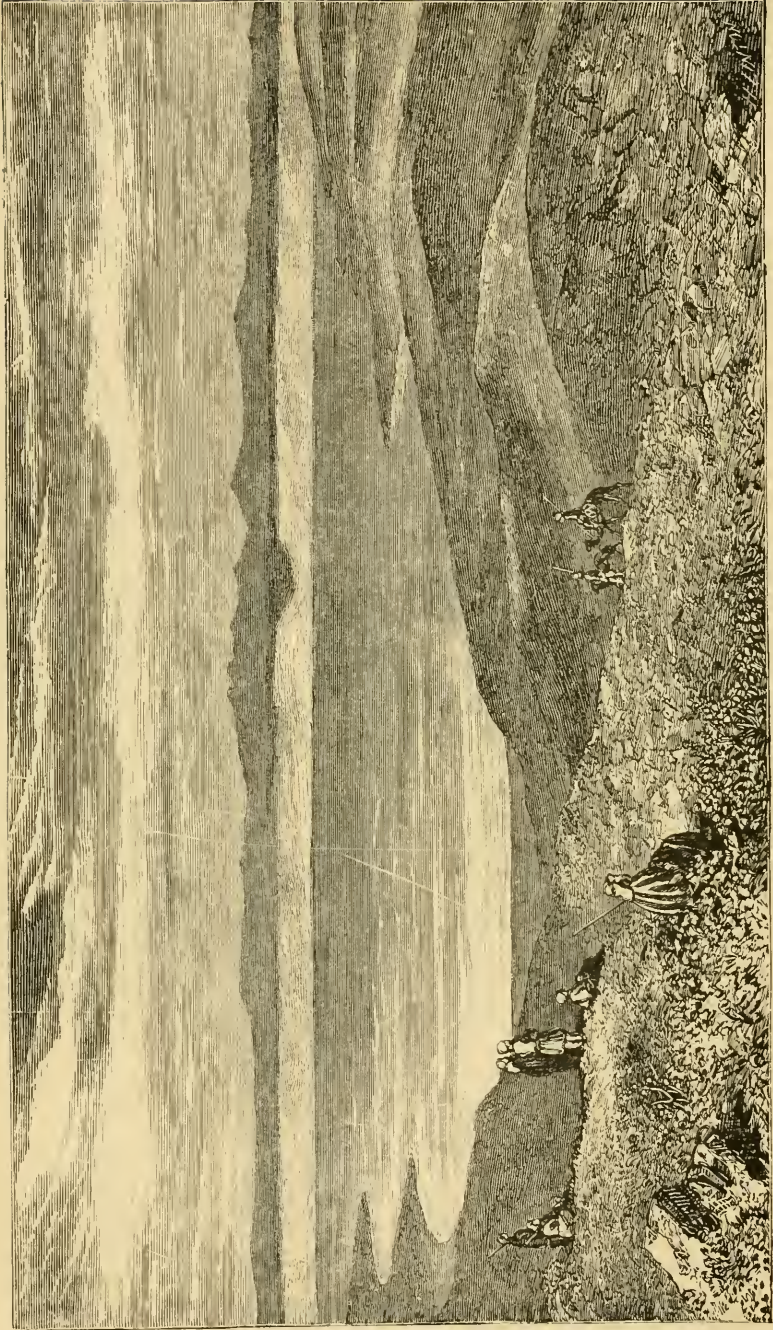
*The foxes have holes, &c.* "It is well, but recollect, for it is right that you should know what you are to embrace." How inexpressibly affecting are these words, on the lips of the WORD "made flesh!" What a history do they reveal of weary days, and shelterless nights—of houseless wanderings, and scanty supplies of food! 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 a man; and 3. Indicates the depth of His abasement; He humbled, yea, emptied Himself, when, being the Son of God, He submitted to be made man. Had this *certain scribe* truly loved Jesus he would not have been deterred by any 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.

21. ¶ And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.  
 ¶ Luke ix. 59, 60. ¶ See 1 Kings xix. 20.

*Another of his disciples, i. e. another,* who was one of His disciples. Tradition says it was Philip. If the former man was too sanguine and inconsiderate, this one 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 to be urged forward. *Lord, suffer me first, &c.* Some suppose that the request was only for permission to take care of an aged father until he should go down to the grave; others, that it was to inter a father who was already a corpse.

22. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.—¶ Eph. ii. 15; 1 Tim. v. 6.





SEA OF GALILEE.

The term *dead* is here used both in its figurative and literal acceptation. It was common among the Jews to describe an ungodly or sinful person as one dead, though alive. Our Saviour therefore means to say that one who had an urgent call to follow Him might leave even his aged father to be cared for, or his dead father to be buried by his other sons or other relatives, who were "dead" to the great concerns of eternal life. (See John v. 25; Rom. v. 14; Col. ii. 13.) 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. We must not let anything upon earth stand between us and instant duty. Infinite interests must take precedence of the finite. Such as are called by Christ to preach the Gospel (see Luke ix. 60) must mind that alone, and leave inferior duties to inferior persons.

23. † And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

The *ship* was a fisherman's boat. Christ had given commandment to depart (verse 18), but was detained by the scribe and the disciple.

24. † And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.—† Mark iv. 37, &c.; Luke viii. 23, &c.

*There arose a great tempest in the sea*—the sea of Galilee. It was a sudden and violent squall, such as those small inland seas, surrounded with mountain gorges, are notoriously exposed to, which 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, as many of them were from their youth, and familiar with all the changes of that lake, would not have been terrified by an ordinary tempest. A sailor will never seek or take help from others as long as he feels that he has resources of his own on which he can rely. Thus they who had set sail, with the sky unfretted with a cloud, the sea unruffled with waves, a fair wind, and every prospect of a prosperous voyage, were soon overtaken with a storm. What an emblem of life, at least, of the life of many! "Judge not according to the appearance." "Boast not thyself of

to-morrow," &c. 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 ye shall have tribulation." "We are they who have come out of great tribulation." The wave which rises the highest only lifts the ship nearest the sky. *But he was asleep.* Like Jonah He slept, but, unlike Jonah, he was the arrester, not the cause of the storm. Exhausted with the toils of the preceding day, on which He had delivered several parables (recorded in Matt. xiii.), Jesus now sought the restoring influence of repose. Here we see His human nature, through which we must fly for hope and help to the clefts of the Rock of his Godhead. How truly was Christ a partaker of our necessities! And what could give us a stronger assurance of His sympathy and compassion! Jesus, though He may *seem* to be indifferent to the condition of His people, has not forgotten them, even when their case may appear to be most desperate. He makes the trial of their faith work patience, and patience, experience, even the blessed experience of His infinite power and love, which *then* shine forth the more resplendently.

25. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

We are now perishing, while thou art sleeping. Our necessity pleads for God's ability. We see their terror in the double "Master, Master," with which, according to Luke, and in the words of almost rebuke. "Master, carest thou not that we perish," with which, according to Mark, they addressed Jesus. In times of imminent peril, how strangely even advanced Christians are forgetful of their own principles!

26. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea: and there was a great calm.

† Ps. lxxv. 7, lxxxix. 9, cvii. 20.

How gentle and tender the rebuke! *Why are ye fearful*, &c. Our Lord rebuked the fear and weak faith of His disciples, first, showing that moral disorders are worse than physical. They had faith, for they turned to Christ in their need, but their faith was not quick and lively; its imperfection showed itself in their excess

of terror; and their counting it possible that the ship which bore their Lord could ever truly perish. A true and saving 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. The shipwrecked sailor, if he has been cast upon a rock but a single foot above the reach of the waves, is perfectly secure. So, if by God's sovereign grace we have been cast upon the Rock of Ages, we are safe. Only let us not rest contented in our present condition, but be daily climbing higher and higher by more fervent prayer, more frequent and intimate communion with Jesus, and by more conscientious and consistent discharge of duty, and we shall reach the summit of that Rock whose head is above the heavens.

*Then he arose, and rebuked, &c.* The word *rebuked* is one which we apply to living and intelligent creatures only—a servant, or a child, 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 discomfiture they seem to have known too well was at hand. Satan, we know, is called “the god of this world,” and the “Prince of the power of the air,” and he is trying to grasp the sceptre which he cannot hold, intruding, and doing mischief wherever he is permitted, and has the power to do so.

*And there was a great calm.* The sea no longer, as after a storm, rises, and falls, and frets, but at once becomes smooth and tranquil, and the rolling vessel rests in peaceful security and quietness on its placid bosom. “And so,” says *Leighton*, “in the soul, when all within is full of confusion and noise—the heart working like a troubled sea, and finding no rest, either from its own persuasions or the most skillful speeches of others, but, amidst all, likely to be swallowed up or split in pieces: then, one word from CHRIST'S mouth quiets all presently, and makes the soul calmer

and smoother than the stillest water in the fairest day.”

Notice the juxtaposition of lowliness and greatness in the scene now before us. In the weary, jaded passenger, wrapped in a coarse fisherman's coat, sleeping amid the chill damps of the evening—we see “the Son of man;” in the stilling of the tempest we see “the Son of God.” The same juxtaposition is always (or generally) found in Christ's history. Born in a stable, yet angels sang of His glory. Baptized by a sinner, with a sinner's rite, a voice from the “Excellent Glory” attested His Divinity. Bethany's tear-drops revealed His *human* heart; Bethany's word of Omnipotence in raising the sheeted dead, proclaimed His Godhead. Calvary's cross shows us a dying man, but a blackened sun, riven rocks, the earth trembling to support its Creator's cross, testified that He who hung in ignominy on that tree was “the mighty God.”

27. But the men marvelled, saying, what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

By the miracle the disciples were led into thoughts, even higher and more awful, of the 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. It is also 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." (See Job. iii. 17; Rev. iv. 6, xxi. and xxii.)

28. \*And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

\*Mark v. 1, &c.; Luke viii. 26, &c.

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 other side*, that is, of the sea of Galilee. *Country of the Gergesenes*. In Mark, and Luke, we read "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. The event here related probably took place in the vicinity of the two cities.

*There met him two possessed with devils*. In describing this fearful scene, each Evangelist that records it has some touches which are peculiarly his own. Mark and Luke note but one demoniac. Here is variation, but not contradiction. He who mentions the one does not deny the other.

These men may have rushed down from their dismal dwelling-place, to encounter with hostile violence the intruders that had dared to set foot on their domain. Or it may have been that they were drawn to Christ by the secret instinctive feeling that He was their helper, and driven from Him by the sense of the awful gulf that divided them from the Holy One of God. If they came with purposes of violence, their mind

was changed ere they fully reached Jesus. (Luke viii. 29.)

*Coming out of the tombs*. They avoided human supervision and society. Gadara is remarkable for a great number of tombs, hewn out of the white limestone rocks, and richly carved. *Exceeding fierce*. They were desperate cases. *No man might*—No man *could* pass that way. There is no road which sin does not make dangerous. These demoniacs are a painfully exact likeness of men in the worst stage of sin, and to that stage all sin tends. There met him *two*. Sinners of the worst stage like to be together.

29. And behold, they cried out, saying, "what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

<sup>b</sup>Acts xvi. 17; James ii. 19.

*What have we to do with thee*. These are the words of the devils by whom the men were possessed, rather than the men themselves, and they mean "what have we in common? Why interestest thou with us? Why wilt thou not let us alone?" *Jesus, thou Son of God?* Perhaps the demoniacs were Jews 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. (Comp. chapter iii. 17.) *Art thou come hither, &c.* How awful and terrible are these glimpses of the unseen world! It is here implied that these evil spirits expect a certain time of torment. (Jude v. 6; 2 Peter ii. 4; Matt. xx. 41.) How miserable an expectation! How thankful should we be, who not only are invited and persuaded to "flee from the wrath to come," but have a promise of all grace which may be needful to us, to support us through dangers, and carry us through temptations!

30. And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding. 31. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

*A good way off*. At a considerable distance on the hills which skirted the plain where our Saviour had landed. *Many swine*. (Mark v. 13.) The Jews were prohibited from keeping swine, which were unclean animals. The herd must therefore have belonged to pagans, or else have been kept for purposes of traffic. In any case,

it might serve as evidence of the legal uncleanness of the people, and of their essentially Gentile disposition. *If thou cast us out, &c.* The demons, becoming aware that they must in some way yield before Jesus, entreated at least to be handled in the mildest way. They had great objections to being in "the deep" (Luke viii. 31), *i. e.*, the abyss or pit of hell, 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 the herd of swine.

32. And he said unto them, *Go.* And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. 33. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

*Go.* This does not mean that Jesus approved of it, only that He permitted it. In Luke viii. 32, "he suffered them." God often and everywhere permits in this world what He does not applaud. *They went, &c.*—of course the demons, not the demoniacs. According to *Paige*, an American Universalist commentator, the demoniacs were merely crazy men, and their insanity was transferred by Jesus to these two thousand pigs! *And behold, the whole herd of swine, &c.* The entire 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*. *Perished*—the swine. The devils, alas! are still alive.

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. So 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 any murrain that causes cattle to die, or inundation that destroys the fruits of the field, or other natural calamity with which God chastises His children, punishes, or seeks to make contrite the hearts of His enemies. For often times 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. *And they that kept them fled, &c.* They that fed the swine repaired to the adjoining city, and reported to the inhabitants all that had occurred.

34. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.  
Deut. v. 25; 1 Kings xvii. 18; Luke v. 8; Acts xvi. 39.

The intelligence of the stupendous miracle so aroused the city, that for the moment the terror produced by it was stronger than the indignation from the loss, and the inhabitants poured forth to meet Jesus; and, seized with superstitious and half-heathen fear, and dreading further destruction of their property, they entreated Him to depart out of their country. When He healed their diseases, they begged Him to remain; but when He deprived them of their property they asked Him to depart. What a contrast to the entreaty of the Samaritans! (John iv. 40.) How many, alas! are there who, though they do not emulate the open opposition of the Gergesenes and ask Jesus to depart, yet 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.

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1. Who came to Jesus and worshiped Him? 2. What did he say? 3. What was the result? 4. Who next came to Christ? 5. For what purpose did he come? 6. What is said of him? 7. Why was the centurion's faith "great?" 8. What is said about sitting down in the kingdom of heaven? 9. What about "the children of the

kingdom?" 10. Mention the miracle in Peter's house. 11. State some of the peculiarities of our Lord's miracles. 12. What did Jesus say to the scribe? What to "another of His disciples?" 13. State the particulars of the "great tempest." 14. Describe the miracles in "the country of the Gergesenes." 15. How do sinners ask Jesus to depart from them?

## CHAPTER IX.

2 *Christ curing one sick of the palsy,* 9 *calleth Matthew from the receipt of custom,* 10 *eateth with publicans and sinners.* 11 *defendeth his disciples for not fasting,* 20 *cureth the bloody issue,* 23 *raiseth from death Jairus' daughter,* 27 *giveth sight to two blind men,* 32 *healeth a dumb man possessed of a devil,* 36 *and hath compassion of the multitude.*

AND He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.—Chap. iv. 13.

*Passed*—at the request of the Gergesenes. The Lord does not thrust His blessings on the unwilling. And by not making too long delays in one place, He aroused the more earnest wishes for His presence. *His own city*—Capernaum, dignified by this inhabitant. The miracle which followed was wrought not many days after the cure of the leper, (viii. 2-4).

2. <sup>b</sup>And behold, they brought unto him a man sick of the palsy, and lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

<sup>c</sup>Mark ii. 3; Luke v. 18. <sup>e</sup>Chap. viii. 10.

*Behold*, merely indicates something new and unexpected. *They brought unto him*—many such offerings were made to the Saviour acceptably. *Sick of 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. (See notes on chap. iv. 24.) *Lying on a bed*. 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 beds in the East consist of cushions and light coverings, spread upon the floor or divan. *Jesus seeing their faith*—that of the paralytic himself, as well as those who brought him, manifested by their making these extraordinary efforts to bring him to Jesus. *Son, be of good cheer*. Be confident, neither thy sins nor thy disease shall stand in thy way.

*Thy sins be forgiven thee*. Saving faith and healing were alike the gift of God, and often, if not commonly, bestowed together. Knowing the state of the man's heart, as

one who mourned more for his sins than his sufferings, our Lord, instead of healing immediately, 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 worth of the pardon which Jesus bestows is valued only by those who groan beneath the burden of sin. The great reformer, Martin Luther, soon after he became a monk, fell dangerously ill. Though he had long sought for pardon, he was filled with terror at the prospect of eternity. An aged monk visited his cell, and reminded him of those words in the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." "Believe," said the old man, "not only that the sins of David or Peter are forgiven, but that your *own* are pardoned." These words were a balm to Luther's wounded heart. He thought no more of gaining heaven by his own righteousness, but he looked with confidence to the mercy of God in Christ. 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. Our Lord's pardoning the paralytic's sins before healing his bodily disease, though it does not show 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 root and cause of all pains and diseases. Much more important is it to have sin forgiven, than sickness or any other bodily evil removed.

3. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

The scribes who, with Pharisees that were present (Luke v. 17), surrounded Jesus, now began to show their malice toward Him. *They said within themselves*,



&c.—reasoned in their hearts. (Mark ii. 6.) The charge of blasphemy which they brought against Him was based upon an arrogation of the Divine prerogative. They were not wrong in supposing that none can forgive sins but God only. They were wrong in not weighing candidly the testimony of God's miracles. "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." 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 this power was no less than blasphemy, how can man, without guilt, undertake to pronounce absolution?

4. And Jesus, <sup>4</sup>knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?  
4Ps. cxxxix. 2; Chap. xii. 25; Mark xii. 15; Luke v. 22, vi. 8, ix. 47, xi. 17.

Our Lord, being aware of their thoughts, asked them, "Why do ye secretly meditate evil?" To know the hearts of men, was, with the Jews, a test of the true Messiah's claims. In telling them, then, what the thoughts of their hearts were, Jesus 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.

5. For whether is easier to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and walk?* 6. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

*Whether is easier to say, &c.* Christ's enemies, 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 seems to have been the great end of the miracles), the Saviour accomplished the miracle of healing, whereby the blessing of the forgiveness of sins was at once manifested and sealed.

*But 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' (Philip. ii. 6) upon my part, to claim the power of forgiving men their sins." The phrase, *the 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.) *Power on earth*, the counterpart of *power in heaven*. It could be no superior scientific skill, it could be no 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. *Then saith he to the sick of the palsy, &c.* "Bed," with the inhabitants of the East, is not that serious and important part of domestic economy that we are accustomed to consider it. It is at best like a very small and narrow sofa, so light as to be easily carried by the occupier himself from place to place, and from room to room, according as caprice or the change of the seasons may require. In general, however, it is nothing more than a mattress, which admits of being spread in a moment on the floor, and which, when not used, is carelessly flung into a corner of the room.

7. And he arose, and departed to his house.

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 (Luke v. 25), and strode with vigorous limbs out of the court (Luke v. 19), through the crowd, which now instinctively made way for him, hastening, under a command so pleasant to obey, first of all to his own house and family, to lend help where he had formerly been a burden, glorifying *God* (Luke v. 25) for the wonderful cure which he had performed on his body, and for the still more wonderful cure He had bestowed on his soul.

8. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The crowd who had gathered from different points (Luke iv. 17), some, no doubt, in search of spiritual benefit, others to see and hear one whose name was in every mouth, wondered at what they had seen. *And glorified God*—an admirable antithesis,

the enthusiasm of the people, over against the murmuring and malice of the scribes. *Power to 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.

From this narrative learn the following practical lessons: 1. Affliction may prove a great blessing to a man's soul. 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, endeavor to bring them to the Saviour, in a spiritual sense; encouraging themselves from this and similar passages. 4. It is a solemn truth that Jesus knows the thoughts of men, whether they are for good or evil. (Ps. cxxxix. 5.) 5. It is delightful to know that Jesus can still forgive sin. (Acts v. 31.)

9. \*And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.—Mark ii. 14: Luke v. 27.

*Passed forth from thence, i. e.,* from the scene of the paralytic's cure in Capernaum, toward the shore of the sea of Galilee, on which that town lay. (Mark ii. 13.) On his way thither the events recorded here occurred. *He saw, that is, looked upon, attentively regarded.* A man named Matthew, elsewhere called Levi. (Luke v. 27; Mark ii. 14.) (See Preface to this Gospel.) *Sitting at the receipt of custom, i. e.,* the place of the receipt of taxes imposed by the Romans on this, as on other subject provinces of the empire. He was actually employed at his calling. 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. As the "receipt of custom" at which Matthew was sitting was not in the town, or at the gate, but, as it would seem, by the sea shore (see Mark ii. 13, 14), it is

presumed that he was one of the inferior officers employed to collect the dues levied upon the fish brought to shore, and upon the vegetables and fire-wood received from the other side of the lake.

*And he saith unto him, Follow me—*giving the words resistless efficacy in the heart of him to whom they were spoken. Doubtless this was not Matthew's first knowledge of the Saviour. The analogy of the class described (chap. 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 as an avowed, decided, and constant disciple, and a future Apostle. *And he arose, 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 unhesitatingly, without the reply of a word, or the least unnecessary delay, he left all in which he had just been immersed, obeyed the summons which was to change the whole tenor of his life.

Note 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 Matthew's case. 4. Conversion now is equally as decisive as it ever was. Matthew's resigning his worldly calling, and worldly gains, was, indeed, 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.

10. †And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. †Mark ii. 15, &c.; Luke v. 29, &c.

*And it came to pass.* This fact occurred probably some six months after the call

mentioned in the last verse. *Jesus sat at meat*, literally was reclining at table, in allusion to the ancient mode of lying on couches at meals, *in the house*, doubtless Matthew's house. When Christ was invited to any table, He never refused to go. He went mainly for an opportunity of conversing and doing good. His dining with publicans and sinners is not a precedent for us, unless we go as He did—a physician to the sick, an instructor to the ignorant. *Many publicans and sinners*. Under this expression were included all those who fell below the Pharisaic observance of the law. *Came and sat down*, &c. Matthew, having had time to be somewhat established in the faith, his compassion for old friends of his own calling and character, led him to gather them together that they might have an opportunity of hearing the gracious words which proceeded out of his Master's mouth, if haply they might experience a like change. Those who have been graciously delivered from the bondage of sin, will wish others also to be set free.

11. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, *Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*—<sup>a</sup>Chap. xi. 19; Luke v. 30, xv. 2. <sup>b</sup>Gal. ii. 15.

*Why eateth your Master*, &c. This fault-finding question was not addressed to the Saviour Himself. The defeat suffered by the Pharisees 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*, He answered, not merely to shame the 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.

12. But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

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*, in health, 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. (See Ex. xv. 8; Ps. cxlvii. 3.) Christ is the most skillful physician (Ps. ciii. 3), the best physician, because He cures the better part—the soul (Heb. ix. 14), the cheapest physician (Luke viii. 43; Isa. lv. 1), the most tender-hearted physician (Hos. xi. 8; Ps. cxlvii. 3), the most successful physician (John xvii. 12), the only physician (Acts iv. 12).

13. But go ye, and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

<sup>1</sup>Hos. vi. 6; <sup>2</sup>Mt. vi. 6, 7, 8; chap. xii. 7. <sup>3</sup>1 Tim. i. 15.

Our Lord further defends Himself by reminding them what God had said by His prophet. (Hos. vi. 6; see also 1 Sam. xv. 22.) *I will have mercy*, &c., that is, “although I have appointed the ceremonial law, with all its rites, sacrifices and distinctions, to be a shadow of good things to come, and though I require, in general, obedience to its rules, yet I value not those outward and formal services, in comparison with acts of moral virtue, and deeds of charity, and feelings of mercy; and if there be an occasion in which mercy cannot be shown to a fellow-creature without neglecting some sacrifice or other ceremonial appointment, let the formal duty be omitted, and let the deed of charity be done.”

*I am not come to call*, &c. We are not to understand that Christ found some who were “whole” and “righteous,” for it is declared that “all have sinned.” He called those scribes and Pharisees so, 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. 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. Jesus Christ did not come into the world merely as a teacher, but as the Saviour of that which was utterly lost, and those only can receive benefit from Him who will confess that they are ruined, bankrupt, hopeless, miserable sinners. If we feel ourselves "righteous," He has nothing to say to us; but if we feel ourselves "sinners," we have a warrant for applying to Him, and trusting in Him to our life's end.

14. ¶ Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

Mark ii. 18, &c.; Luke v. 33, &c., and xviii. 12.

*Fast oft.* (See Luke xviii. 12.) The Pharisees probably 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. A life of austere devotion, of the sternest Old Testament spirit, was practised by John and his disciples, many of whom may have been from among the Essenes, and their previous asceticism would lead them to regard with surprise the departure of Jesus and His disciples from the stern habits of self-denial practised by their Master. There seems also to be a tinge of censure in the question.

15. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

¶ Luke v. 34, 35, John iii. 29; Acts xiii. 2, 3, and xv. 23; 1 Cor. vii. 5.

Here is an evident allusion to the last testimony of John the Baptist. (John iii.) The *children of the bride-chamber* were the attendant young comrades of the bridegroom, who assisted in the festivities of the wedding. 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. What a wonderful intimation does the figure *bridegroom* make of what Christ is to His people! He loves them with a deep and everlasting love, takes them into union with Himself, supplies their daily need, sympathizes with them in all their troubles, bears with all their infirmities, and will one day bring them to share with Him the glory that He has received from His Father, that where He is, they may be also. They are the Lamb's wife. (Rev. xix. 7.)

*But 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* from them; an evident allusion to the violent death He should die, *and then shall they fast*. Though this expression does not seem to warrant the inference drawn 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 practised by believers after our Lord's ascension. (See Notes on chap. iv. and vi. 16-18.) 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.

16. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment: for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. 17. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

*For that which is put in, &c.* 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 old and the 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*.

*Neither do men put new wine, &c.* Bottles, which were anciently made of the skins of animals, would, when they were old, become dry, and incapable of swelling as the new wine would ferment, and hence they would burst, and both the wine and the leather bottles be ruined. It was necessary, therefore, that unfermented wine should be put into fresh skin bottles, so that the bottles might swell as the wine fermented. The *first* parable tells us that the improvement must not be begun externally, leaving the state of the inner man untouched; this second one shows inversely, that the internal renovation must reach to what is outward, and give to this a suitable direction.

18. ¶ While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. 19. And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his disciples. 20. ¶ And behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. 21. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. 22. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. 23. ¶ And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, 24. He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. 26. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

¶ Mark v. 22, &c.; Luke viii. 41, &c. ¶ Mark v. 25; Luke viii. 42. ¶ Luke vii. 50, viii. 48, xvii. 19, xviii. 42. ¶ Mark v. 38; Luke viii. 51. ¶ See 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. ¶ Acts xx. 19. ¶ Or, *this fame*.

*Daughter, be of good comfort, &c.* As the woman felt a confidence even in the efficacy of but touching the hem in His garment, so let us even in the absence of all near or vivid conception of Him, when such manifestations are wanting, and all light save that of simple credence, all power save that of naming His name, have forsaken us—let us even in these circumstances of distance and desertion, have but faith in the name, and like the woman cured of her issue, we shall be made whole. *The min-*

*strels and the people making a noise.* Vocal and instrumental music formed part of the means of expressing sorrow on the loss of friends. Loud and doleful sounds rose immediately from all present when a friend died. (Jer. ix. 17–22.) *Not dead, but sleeping, &c.* Death is but a sleep; in respect of Him who raised a dead person more easily than we can awake one who is asleep. Even the death of the soul is but a sleep, when God has resolved to awaken the sinner, and to restore to him the life of His grace. The world laughs at the truths which it neither comprehends nor loves, and at those who publish them. A faithful minister keeps on his pace, and ceases not to work the work of God.

*And the maid arose.* How wonderful that sight must have been! Who that has ever seen the dead can forget the stillness, the silence, the coldness, when the breath has left the body? Who can forget the awful feeling, that a mighty change has taken place, and a mighty gulf been placed between ourselves and the departed? But behold! our Lord goes to the chamber where the dead lies, and calls the spirit back to its earthly tabernacle. The pulse once more beats; the eyes once more see; the breath once more comes and goes. The ruler's daughter is once more alive, and restored to her father and mother. This was omnipotence indeed! None could have done this but He who first created man, and has all power in heaven and earth. (For a fuller exposition of the above verses see on Mark v. 21–43.)

27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

¶ Chap. xv. 22, xx. 30, 31. Mark. 47, 48; Luke xviii. 33, 38.

This miracle, and that which follows, of the dumb demoniac, are recorded by Matthew alone. *When Jesus departed thence*, returned from the ruler's house to His own sojourn. *Two blind men followed him.* They were not blind by nature, but by disease. Blindness is extremely common in the East from many causes; e. g., the quantities of dust and sand pulverized by the sun's intense heat, the perpetual glare of light, the contrast of the heat with the cold sea-air on the coast, where blindness is especially prevalent, the dews at night while they sleep on the roofs, small-pox, old age,

&c., and perhaps, more than all, the Mohammedan fatalism, which leads to a neglect of the proper remedies in time. . . . *Two.* They were partners in sorrow. They may have followed Jesus with their cry for aid immediately on His leaving the house of Jairus. There was the same trial of faith in their case, although in a more mitigated form, as in that of the woman of Canaan. (Matt. xv. 22, 23, compared with Mark vii. 24.) This is the first of the many cases of healing of the blind recorded in the Gospel narrative. (Matt. xii. 22, xx. 30, xxi. 14; John ix.)

*Thou son of David.* (Matt. xv. 22, xx. 30, 31.) This is the first time we read of this title being given to Jesus, except by the angel Gabriel before His birth. (Luke i. 32.) By this title He was acknowledged to be the Messiah, or Christ, who, as all Jews agreed, was to be *the son of David* (Matt. xxii. 42, xii. 23, and John vii. 42), and by being the Son of David, Jesus had a right to the title of Messiah. (2 Sam. vii. 13, 16.) Can there be a doubt that the faith of these blind men, in thus addressing Jesus, fastened on such great Messianic promises as that in Isa. xxxv. 5? Notice that they believed *by* hearing only; they relied on the testimony of others who had seen Christ's miracles; the eyes of their understanding were enlightened, if their bodily eyes were dark. (John xx. 29) We must never despair of any one's salvation, merely because he lives in a position unfavorable to his soul. *Have mercy on us*—a virtual request that He should restore their sight by removing the cause of their blindness.

23. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

*The house*—His dwelling at Capernaum. The blind men came to him. They found their way in the train of Christ, as if some glimmer of light had already been granted. They evinced a determination to take no refusal in regard to the boon they were seeking. *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* *i. e.*, to cure their blindness. Of course our Lord did not require assurance on this point. (John ii. 25.) As the men had attested their belief in the cry with which they followed Him through the street, we

are to regard Him as having asked this question in order to deepen their faith, to raise their expectation of a cure, and so prepare them to receive it, and the cordial acknowledgment, so touchingly simple—*yea, Lord*, which they immediately made to Him of His power to heal them, shows how entirely that object was gained. Confession confirms faith. (See Rom. x. 10.)

29. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you.

*Touched their eyes.* This would show that the cure was no accidental circumstance. (See Matt. xx. 34.) On other similar occasions, Jesus used other means. (John ix. 6, 7.) *According to your faith, &c.*—your confidence in me. The meaning is not, receive a cure *proportioned* to your faith, but, receive this cure as *granted* to your faith. Here we see the relation of man's faith and God's gift. "Faith, which in itself is nothing, is yet the organ of receiving everything. It is the bucket let down into the fountain of God's grace, without which the man could not draw up out of that fountain; the purse, which does not itself make its owner rich, but which yet effectually enriches him by the treasure which it contains." Faith is a readiness to receive of God; it is this only which prescribes a limit to Divine love! (See xiii. 58; Mark vi. 5; Acts xiv. 9.)

30. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straightly charged them, saying, *See that no man know it.*

<sup>r</sup>Chap. viii. 4, xii. 16, xvii. 9; Luke v. 14.

*Their eyes were opened.* A Hebrew idiom, neither remote nor inelegant, to denote *they received their sight*. The result proved their faith to be perfectly earnest and sincere. Our Lord had before proved Himself one with Him "that giveth breath unto the people," &c. (Isa. xliii. 5), and now it was shown that He it was of whom the Father had said, "I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, . . . to open the blind eyes," &c. (Isa. xliii. 6, 7; see also Isa. lxi. 1, comp. with Luke iv. 18.) We are left to fill up the sketch in the case of these two men. What must have been their feelings as soon as they received sight! O what joy, what ecstasy, what gratitude, would they discover! How would they look and gaze—all things are become new! How would they first fasten their eyes upon

their Benefactor and Deliverer, admiring, weeping, adoring! (Job xlii. 5.)

*Straitly, strictly.* See that no man know it. Of course those who knew the blind men would perceive the change, and there must have been spectators of the transaction. The men were not to be noisy heralds of their miraculous cure. As our Lord's whole course was sublimely noiseless (chap. xii. 19), so we find Him, although He directed some of His miracles to be proclaimed abroad, repeatedly taking steps to prevent matters coming prematurely to a crisis with Him. As to the present instance, He may have given this strict charge either to avoid needlessly exciting the opposition of enemies, or furnishing plausible accusations against Himself, or because He had performed several miracles that day, and if these men, as they would naturally be inclined to do, should proclaim Him as Messiah, the people, who regarded Him rather in the light of one who was to establish a great temporal dominion, might be induced to take rash measures in seeking honor for Him, and demanding for Him some great dignity (see John vi. 15), thus throwing the people of Galilee into rebellion against their temporal rulers, which was quite contrary to the purposes of Jesus. The inconvenient consequences of a premature disclosure of His deeds of mercy, appear in Mark i. 45. (See notes on chap. viii. 4.)

31. ¶ But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.—¶ Mark vii. 36.

It is probable that the fame of this miracle spread far beyond Capernaum. Hence the title, *Son of David*, became now generally known, and Jesus felt all the more inclined soon to leave the district. *Spread abroad*, &c. A similar consequence ensued on all such occasions. (Matt. viii. 4; Mark i. 44, 45, vii. 36.) Obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. xv. 22), even though that sacrifice may appear in honor of God Himself; and we see in this publishing of the miracle, after the prohibition given, a blemish in the perfectness of their faith who did it—a fault, though a fault into which they only, who were full of gratitude and thankfulness, could have fallen. Their motives were doubtless good, but

their conduct was unjustifiable. "However," says one, "it may be profitable to remark, 1. That honor pursues those who fly from it. 2. He who is thoroughly sensible of God's mercies cannot long withhold his acknowledgments. 3. God in general requires that what a man has received, for his own salvation, shall become subservient to the salvation of others (Matt. v. 16), God choosing to help man by man, that all may be knit together in brotherly love." (Ps. lxxvi. 16.)

Note 1. We are all by nature spiritually blind; no more qualified, without Divine illumination, for the concerns of the moral world than those blind men for those of the natural world. 2. We are in as hopeful condition as they. In this miracle Jesus holds Himself forth as the all-sufficient helper of sinners. 3. We should imitate these men in an earnest, inopportune cry for mercy.

32. ¶ As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

¶ See chap. xii. 22; Luke xi. 14.

*As they went out.* This was indeed a day of marvelous wonders—a bloody issue, death, blind eyes, and dumb lips, all made to yield to Christ's restorative power! *A dumb man*—the dumbness was not natural, but was the effect of the possession. The power of the demons was exerted in various ways. *Possessed with a devil.* A Universalist commentator says that this man was "probably an insane man, who fancied he could not speak, or he would not;" which illustrates the rationalistic character of Universalism. The fact is, that the Jews themselves made a distinction between merely diseased persons and persons who were both diseased and possessed. Mark (vii. 32-35) reports the cure of a deaf mute who was not possessed.

33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake; and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

*The dumb spake.* The record is singularly brief. On the removal of the malignant oppression on the power of speech, it returned, and was used. Here, again, was a fulfillment of a prophecy relating to the days of the Messiah. (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.) There is a moral dumbness, and the Saviour heals this when He makes any one a new creature. The man had a tongue before, but not a religious one. He spake before,

but now his speech is with grace. Now he speaks of God, for God, and to God. *And the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel*—referring, probably not to this case only, but to all those miraculous displays of healing power which seemed to promise a new era in the history of Israel. “Never before has the appearance of the promised deliverance been so fully realized.” (See Isa. xxxv. 5-7.) Probably, also, the people besides wondering, meant by this language to indicate, as far as they thought it safe to do so, their inclination to regard Jesus as the promised Messiah. This may have led to the sudden and malignant accusation mentioned in the next verse.

34. But the Pharisees said, “He casteth out devils, through the prince of the devils.”

“Chap. xii. 24; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15.

These enemies of our Lord, the same as referred to in verse 11, 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, connection and fellowship with *the prince of devils*. Satan is afterward so designated, more particularly in chap. xii. 24.

35. “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people.”

“Mark vi. 6; Luke xiii. 22. “Chap. iv. 23.

We have here Jesus presented to us as the untiring and devoted missionary. From the parallel passages we gather that Jesus now traveled along the lake, through *the cities and villages of Galilee*. Accordingly, we distinguish three missionary journeys which He made in Galilee. 1. To the Mount of Beatitudes. 2. Across the sea. 3. Through the valley, along the shore, in the direction of Jerusalem. It is to the last that the text refers. He *went about*, &c.—for it was holy ground wherever He could stand, and it was a sanctuary wherever He could be heard. (See notes on chap. iv. 23.) We should not be content to be Christians for ourselves, to sit in our own room and feast upon the Gospel alone, but should endeavor to supply it to others. We should go and see the poor and the afflicted, and then we will feel for them. It is easy to give

a cold pittance of charity at a church collection, and to think that this is the religion of Jesus, but let us not be deceived. “I was sick, and ye *visited me*.” “Pure religion, before God and the Father, is this, *To visit*,” &c. *Preaching the Gospel . . . . . healing . . . . . sickness*. Our Lord’s mercy to the body secured reception for His medicine for the soul. Jesus was an eye-witness of all the ills that flesh is heir to. He saw ailments of every kind, sort and description. We are each dwelling in a poor, frail body. We know not what racking complaint we may have to submit to before we lie down and die. We know not what quantity of suffering we may have to watch as we sit by the bed-side of dear relations and friends. Let us arm ourselves betimes with the precious thought that Jesus is specially fitted to be the sick man’s friend.

36. ¶ “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

“Mark vi. 34. “Num. xxvii. 17; 1 Kings xxii. 17; Ezek. xxxiv. 5; Zech. x. 2.

*Saw the multitudes*. Galilee was at that time a thickly peopled country; its towns and villages swarmed with inhabitants, so that it got the name of “Galilee of the nations,” or populous Galilee. *He was moved with compassion*. His loving heart could not but feel deep pity, as He saw them ignorant, hopeless, helpless, dying, and unfit to die. This shows that while He was “God over all, blessed for ever,” He was also as truly man. It is the part of a man to be overcome by what he sees. There is something very saddening to a Christian, in looking upon a current of human beings in a teeming city or crowded church, flowing onward to eternity, because the most are perishing souls. It was this that touched the bosom of Jesus. How does such a sight affect us? *Because they fainted*. The epithet “fainted” is applied to them in their character of sheep, who were *worried and exhausted* in the way. *Scattered abroad*, like sheep, which, when driven away from the fold, are scattered over the mountains, and run every one to his own way. *Having no shepherd*. (Ezek. xxxiv. 5, 6.) When sheep driven from the fold, have no shepherd to seek them and bring them back, their case is desperate. So was it with the people of Galilee in Christ’s day. They were a



vast disorganized mass, in wretchedness as the victims of Pharisaic guidance, their souls uncared for, and drawn after and hanging upon Him. If they had had pastors after God's own heart, their case would not have been so bad, but they had not these, and this made Jesus sad.

37. Then saith he unto his disciples, <sup>1</sup>The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. 38. <sup>2</sup>Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

<sup>1</sup>Luke x. 2; John iv. 35. <sup>2</sup>2 Thes. iii. 1.

*The harvest truly is plenteous, &c.* Our Lord's eye doubtless rested immediately on the Jewish field, but this He saw widening into the vast field of "the world" (chap. xiii. 38), teeming with souls having to be gathered to Him. And the Gospel reapers for this vast white field, where are they? None as yet but myself. Let it be observed: 1. That the world is an harvest field. Like a waving field of golden grain it invites many reapers, and demands haste. 2. That ministers are to be laborers in this field. They are to come into it, not to become lords of it, or to stand idle, but to work. 3. That it belongs to God alone to send forth laborers into His harvest. Colleges can give learning, congregations may elect, bishops or presbyters may ordain; but all will be worthless without the unction of the Holy Ghost. 4. That the number of faithful laborers is comparatively small. 5. That it is the duty of Christians individually, and the church collectively, to pray earnestly and incessantly to the Lord of the harvest to send forth an increased number of faithful

laborers. Otherwise the ripe corn will be shaken, and shed its fruit upon the ground, before it can be cut down and gathered in. The word translated *send forth* conveys the idea of *urgency*, and signifying, as it literally does, "to cast forth;" 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! To increase this number there must be prayer to Christ, who is Himself *the Lord of the harvest*. Divine operation will not dispense with human coöperation. God will do, in answer to prayer, what will not be done without prayer. Low faith in the church produces slow development of the work of salvation. Not all Christians have money to give to missions; very few have intellectual gifts, or extensive influence among men; but all believers can pray for the success of the Gospel, and they ought to pray for it daily. Giving money is good; but praying is best of all. Especially is it the duty of the minister of the Gospel to use this weapon. (Acts vi. 4; Eph. vi. 17, 18.) This is the way to win a blessing on his own ministry, and this, above all, is the way to procure helpers to carry on Christ's work.

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1. Who was brought to Jesus? 2. How was the paralytic cured? 3. What objection was made? 4. What answer did Christ give? 5. How was Matthew called to be a disciple? 6. What are the practical reflections on this case? 7. What objection was made to Christ's eating with publicans and sinners? 8. What was His reply? 9. Whom did our Lord come to call to repentance? 10. Explain verses 14, 15? 11. How are we to understand verses 16 and 17? 12. Repeat the particulars of the two miracles which follow. 13. What is said about the cure of the blind men? 14. What is meant by "possessed with a devil?" 15. When and why was Christ moved with compassion? 16. What did He say to His disciples?
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## CHAPTER X.

1. *Christ sendeth out his twelve apostles, enabling them with power to do miracles, 5 giveth them their charge, teacheth them, 16 comforteth them against persecutions: 40 and promiseth a blessing to those that receive them.*

AND when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.  
\*Mark iii. 13, 14, vi. 7; Luke vi. 13, ix. 1. 10r, over.

And shows that this is closely connected with the end of chapter ix. When he had called unto him—formally, his twelve disciples. It is not the appointment of the twelve, but only their trial mission, which our Evangelist here records.

He gave them power, &c. This was to be an evidence of their commission. It was also a benevolent provision for the sick and afflicted, that this power to heal was given to the Apostles. What an evidence this of Christ's divinity! The power was inherent in Himself. He could not only work miracles, but could enable others to work them in His name. No other instance of such an appointment of this kind ever occurred. God put His Spirit on those whom Moses had appointed, but Moses did not give them power. The spirit of Elijah, in answer to his own prayer, rested on Elisha; Elijah did not give him power. (Num. xi. 16, xvii. 25; 2 Kings ii. 9-11.)

"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, revelry, and the like, faithfully proving them." He whose ministry is not accompanied with healing of diseased souls, was never called of God. But though the requisite spiritual gifts for the ministry must be supplied by God Himself, this does not preclude the importance of human learning. The influence of the Spirit no more renders human learning needless, than human learning supersedes the necessity of Divine inspiration.

2. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;—John i. 42.

3. Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus;

4. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

\*Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13. 2Greek, Kananite, that is, Zealot, as in Luke vi. 15. 4John xiii. 26.

*Apostles.* The word Apostle signifies one sent. In the New Testament the term is confined to the twelve, who were chosen by Christ to attend His ministry, and propagate the Gospel after His death.

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

MATTHEW X. 2, 3, 4.	MARK III. 16, 19.	LUKE VI. 14-16.	ACTS 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.
10. Lebbeus, surnamed Thaddeus.	10. Thaddeus.	10. Simon Zelotes, and	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."	

For the history of the Apostles, see Index.

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 apostacy and death.

"The two grand characteristics of the apostolic body," says a modern commentator, "were *Unity and Diversity*."

1. *Unity*—The Apostles were all men; not one of them an angel, not one of them

a woman. They were all Jews; all believers in the unity and holiness of God; all believers in Jesus Christ; were of the same official rank; were one in doctrine and practice and general aim. They were one, not organically, but through the possession of a common life—that derived from Christ.

2. *Diversity*—They were not all Palestinian Jews. Only one had been born into the rights of Roman citizenship. Some of them were married; at least one lived and died unmarried. Some had followed one kind of worldly calling, and some another. Paul was summoned from the highest social position; Matthew from the lowest. While probably all were endowed with an ardent temperament, the temperaments of those best known differed, and only one, Paul, had the temperament to which belong the highest qualities. Some were men of ordinary intellectual ability; others of the highest. One was constitutionally sceptical; another practical; another intuitive; another logical. James was conservative; Paul was progressive; John held the balance pretty evenly between the two. One, in addition to some youthful Greek culture, was learned and trained to think even if judged by the highest Rabbinic standard. The labors, the successes, the trials, of some are narrated, while those of others are kept secret with God. Some are known as writers; some as preachers; others as both preachers and writers. Some spent life chiefly in large cities; others elsewhere. Some were more useful in converting men and organizing them into churches; some in instructing them; others equally useful in doing both. Some were mere narrators of the facts of Christianity; others, bold defenders of the truth against the errorists of their times. Some have a world-wide reputation, while of others nothing is known but their names. Such were the diversities of the Apostles, yet they awoke among themselves no jealousies, no contempt, no coldness. The men were one in sentiment, in doctrine, in purpose, and in joy over each other's success. These diversities are repeated, by divine intention, in ministers of modern times.

5. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and

into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6. "But go rather to the <sup>1</sup>lost sheep of the house of Israel. "Chap. iv. 15. <sup>2</sup> Kings xvii. 24; John iv. 9, 20. "Chap. xv. 24. <sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 46.

Why Jesus chose and sent forth the twelve, it is difficult to say. Perhaps, if He had taken fewer, it would have been too limited a testimony. Or, perhaps, He selected twelve, because that was the number of the tribes of Israel (Matt. xix.), thus intimating that He was king of Israel. Certainly there was a Divine *idea* in the choice of twelve; this appears from the symbolical usages in the Apocalypse, where (Rev. xii. 1) the woman symbolizing 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.

*The Samaritans* were the remnant of the twelve tribes mingled with the heathen who preceded them, and were settled in the half tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh, or in that part of Palestine so called. Our Lord had preached to their cities in His journey. (John iv.) Shortly after His ascension the Gospel was preached in Samaria. (Acts viii. 5, and xiv. 1, 8.) *But go rather, &c.* For great ends the ministry of the Apostles was to be restricted for the present to the Jews. (Matt. xv. 24.) They were Christ's own people, of whom He came, and to whom He was promised, and were astray in mind and life. After He rose from the dead, our Lord extended the commission of the Apostles to the utmost isles and nations of the Gentiles. (Chap. xxviii. 19.) Even in later times, however, the line or order of missionary exertion was, "to the Jew first," "beginning at Jerusalem." *House of Israel*—a Hebraism for people of Israel. The condition of people before being brought to Christ is a *lost* condition.

7. <sup>1</sup>And as ye go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

<sup>2</sup>Luke ix. 2. <sup>3</sup>Chap. iii. 2; iv. 17; Luke x. 9.

Preaching of the Gospel was the prime object of the mission of the Apostles. It is the special means appointed by Christ for the saving of lost sinners. *The kingdom, &c.* (See notes on chap. iii. 2; iv. 17.)

8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: <sup>1</sup>freely ye have received, freely give.

*Sick . . . . . devils*—a gradation. The power Jesus gave them to *heal*, He has superabundantly in Himself for our heal-

ing, and He is our Jesus only so far as we own Him for that end. *Lepers*. (See on chap. viii. 2.) The preaching was to be confirmed by the miracle. Ministers should take a deep and tender interest in the sick. *Freely*, &c. This is not inconsistent with the conclusion of verse 10. The laborer is worthy of his hire, but the power freely obtained was not to be made a means of gain.

9. <sup>9</sup>Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; 10. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: <sup>9</sup>for the workman is worthy of his meat.

<sup>9</sup>Mark vi. 8; Luke ix. 3; x. 4; xxii. 35; 3or *Get*. <sup>9</sup>Mark vi. 8; <sup>9</sup>Gr. a *staff*. <sup>9</sup>Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 7, &c.; 1 Tim. v. 18.

*Provide*, &c., that is, for this journey. *Gold . . . . silver . . . . brass*. Reference is here made to the various coins of money in use among the Jews. *Purses*, literally, *girdles*. The folds of the girdle were used by the Jews to carry money. *Scrip*—a bag or wallet slung upon the person, to contain provision. Neither *two coats*—no new clothes to supply the place of the old when worn out. *Nor shoes*, but sandals (Mark. vi. 9), as less expensive and luxurious. 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. *For the workman is worthy of his meat*. Meat includes all the articles enumerated in verses 9, 10. It is the *workman* who is to get a maintenance. In Luke x. 7, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." This general statement implies *here*, that they might be sure their wants should be supplied without preparations. In 1 Cor. ix. 4, Paul assures us "that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel." The fundamental idea is that they were to go forth to the discharge of their office, without any anxious care for the future, with the slightest provision, and in dependence upon being provided for by the way. Not only should ministers, in their style of living, be careful to avoid the spirit of the world, but all believers should show simplicity and unworldliness in their daily life.

11. <sup>11</sup>And into whatever city or town ye shall enter; inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence.—<sup>11</sup>Luke x. 8.

*Inquire*, ask of others. The godly are easily discovered by the godly. *Worthy*, of being your host, until you leave the

city. Do not "go from house to house." (Luke x. 7.) It is a very common thing in the East, when a stranger arrives in a town, to invite him to meals. 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*. We are not to be fastidious, or fickle, or too much concerned in regard to those things which concern the life of the body.

12. And when ye come into a house, salute it.

The formulâ of salutation is given in Luke x. 5. The custom of saluting friends after this manner is still retained among the Turks and other Eastern nations. The disciples of our Lord were not to neglect the usual forms of politeness and friendship. But this salutation was not to be a mere form, not a compliment only, but much more a prayer and a blessing. Our Lord adopted customary forms and ceremonies, but elevated them to a higher use.

13. <sup>13</sup>And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; <sup>13</sup>but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.—<sup>13</sup>Luke x. 5. <sup>13</sup>Ps. xxxv. 13.

*Let your peace come, i. e.*, it shall come—the imperative is used for the future. And perhaps many seeming imprecations in the Old Testament may most easily be accounted for by such an explanation—as prophetic predictions of what should happen to the enemies of God and His people. If the house had occupants, who were so disposed to receive the truth as to be worthy of the salutation with which the Apostles entered the dwelling, then the blessing invoked in the salutation was to come upon those occupants, and "rest" upon them (see x. 6), permanently abide, (Phil. iv. 7) and the messengers of Christ would further instruct and pray for them; but where this was not the case, the prayers and endeavors of the Apostles would return in blessings on themselves (see Ps. xxxv. 13), by the assurance of duty performed, and an increase of tranquility and spiritual strength. That which has gone forth from the bounty of God, has not gone forth in vain. Here is a consolation for ministers who seem to themselves to do no good

14. \*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

<sup>6</sup>Mark vi. 11; Luke ix. 5, x. 10, 11. <sup>7</sup>Neh. v. 13; Acts xiii. 51, xviii. 6.

And whosoever, &c. The Apostles are thus prepared to find some who would refuse to hear their message. *When ye depart out of that house or city*—for possibly a whole town might not furnish one “worthy.” *Shake off*, &c. Guilt is conceived of as adhering to the feet or shoes. (1 Kings ii. 5.) By this symbolical action (which would be perfectly intelligible to the Jews) they would shake themselves from all connection with such, and all responsibility for the guilt of rejecting them and their message. 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, how much more will their sermons do this?

15. Verily, I say unto you, <sup>10</sup>It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

<sup>11</sup>Chap. xi. 22; 24; Luke x. 12.

According to the common conception, the judgment of retribution has already smitten *Sodom and Gomorrah*. (See Gen. xiii. 13; xviii. 20, 21, 32; xix. 24, 25.) According to the steady teaching of the New Testament, however, this judgment, terrific though it was, is only a foretaste to that which is to be expected at the end of days. (See Jude, verse 7.) *More tolerable*—more bearable. *That city*—not the bricks and walls, but the wicked persons in it. Those cities of the plain which were given to the flames for their loathsome impurities, shall be treated as less criminal, and better bear their punishment, on account of its comparative lightness, than those places, though morally respectable, which would not receive Christ’s messengers, nor hear their words. (See on chap. xi. 20–24.)

Here, 1. We learn the high rank which Jesus ascribes to His ministering servants, as well as see a striking revelation of His own self-consciousness that He was Divine. 2. That there shall be a day of judgment. 3. That the sin of those who reject the Gospel must be a wilful sin, which it was in their power to avoid, inasmuch as it increases their guilt. 4. That

on the day of judgment there will be degrees of retribution proportioned to the guilt. 5. That the clearness of the light against which sin is committed aggravates the guilt. 6. That sinners are not to be annihilated, for then, how could it be “more tolerable” for some than others? 7. 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. To hear of the “great salvation,” and yet merely “neglect” it, is one of the worst sins man can commit (John xvi. 9), and if persisted in, must end in hopeless and fearful ruin.

16. <sup>1</sup>Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; <sup>2</sup>ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

<sup>3</sup>Luke x. 3. <sup>4</sup>Rom. xvi. 19; Eph. v. 15. <sup>5</sup>1 Cor. xiv. 20; Phil. ii. 15.

*Behold, I send you*—thus the dignity of the Apostles’ office is shown. Those who exercise the ministerial function must have a lawful call and commission. (Heb. v. 4; Jer. xxxiii. 32.) *As sheep*, this denotes the character of the Christian mission, and in the *midst of wolves*, the condition of an unbelieving world. Though the faith was to be propagated only by the mild measures of persuasion, yet even this would not prevent furious and implacable men from employing all the iniquitous contrivances of fraud and violence for its suppression, and against its messengers, meek, harmless and unable to defend themselves. So frankly did our Lord warn His Apostles of the peculiar dangers and trials that awaited them. Their work was to be glorious, but would be hazardous.

*Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*. Here is the prescription. The serpent was the hieroglyph of wisdom on Egyptian monuments, and to be sharp-sighted as a serpent, was a proverb among the Greeks and Romans. The dove, which was so acceptable, that in the old law God would have it offered in sacrifice, has always been regarded as the emblem of meekness, innocence and purity. (Luke iii. 22.) The Apostles were to be prudent as serpents, in avoiding unnecessary dangers, and by no inadvertency give their opponents advantage against them, and yet to maintain a holy simplicity of soul, and be harmless and inoffensive. The

wisdom and innocence were to be united, so that in the union the one might be free from all subtlety, and the other from indiscretion. Wonderful combination! Jesus, here, as always, brings into their higher unity, things which elsewhere oppose and contradict each other. We must have the innocence of the dove, that we may not betray the truth, and the wisdom of the serpent, that we may not betray ourselves. Religion without policy is too weak to be safe; policy without religion is too subtle to be good. (See Acts vii. 22; Num. xii. 3; Dan. v. 14, vi. 4; Acts xxiii. 6.)

17. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

<sup>a</sup>Chap. xxiv. 9; Mark xiii. 9; Luke xii. 11, xxi. 12. <sup>b</sup>Acts v. 40. <sup>c</sup>Acts xii. 1, xxiv. 10, xxv. 7, 23; 2 Tim. iv. 16.

In order to occupy a right position with reference to persecutors, they were to beware of men generally, whose weakness frequently degenerates into treachery. For they will deliver you, &c. Some will accuse you and arraign you for trial. *Councils.* The smaller courts in Palestine (see Deut. xv. 18), subordinate to the grand Sanhedrim, which is, however, included here in the idea. *Synagogues.* For the punishment of scourging, see Deut. xxv. 2, 3. It appears that the Jews caused to be chastised in some part of the synagogue those whom they judged guilty of heresy. (See Acts xxii. 19; Matt. xxiii. 34.)

*Governors*—provincial rulers, *kings*—the highest tribunals. Accordingly the Apostles were, several of them, obliged to appear before princes, and were severely persecuted by their malicious enemies before Herod, Agrippa, Felix, Festus, Nero, Domitian, &c., as we learn from sacred or profane history. For my sake—in consequence of being my followers, and the preachers of my word. For a testimony against them and the Gentiles, or, as the passage might be rendered, to them (i. e., the Jews), and the Gentiles. The meaning may be, either, 1. "That they hearing your doctrines, seeing your miracles, as well as witnessing your simplicity and innocence, and resignation to suffering, may either embrace the truth, or be left without excuse;" or, 2. "This shall proclaim and testify the Gospel to Gentiles and Jews." Some of the best op-

portunities for publicly defending the Messiah's cause were afforded by these arraignments (see Acts iv. 5-22, 29-32, xxii. 1-21, xxiii. 1-11, xxiv. 10-25, xxvi. 1-23; comp. also Acts xvii. 19-34; Phil. i. 12, 13), and, besides, these trials, resulting in martyrdom, would be the highest spiritual confirmation of the Gospel both to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

<sup>a</sup>Mark xiii. 11, 12, 13; Luke xii. 11, xxi. 14, 15. <sup>b</sup>Ex. iv. 12; Jer. i. 7. <sup>c</sup>2 Sam. xxiii. 2; Acts iv. 8, vi. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 17.

*Take no thought.* Christ does not forbid all forethoughts what to say, but only anxious thoughts, that they should not, like orators, or advocates, strive to make studied pleas, or rhetorical apologies in their public defenses. In preaching the Gospel, all self and self-seeking are completely to cease. Carefulness about rhetorical ornaments restrains and adulterates the spiritual life. *How* relates to the form, and *What* to the substance. For it shall be given you, &c. The assistance promised should be so complete that they would be mere instruments, or organs of the Spirit. The highest authority is here given 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.) 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 by the words, when they deliver you up, and in that same hour.

For it is not ye that speak, &c. The doctrine of inspiration is here stated in its strongest form. And if the Apostles were furnished with this inspiration in their momentary times of trial, and in their oral testimony of Christ, 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 qualifications? (See 2 Cor. xiii. 3; x. 10.) But the Spirit of your Father. In Luke xii. 12, "the Holy Ghost." Our Lord, in speaking to His disciples, never, except in the prayer which He

taught *them*, says *our* Father, but either *my* Father, or *your* Father, or both conjoined, for He is the eternal and only begotten Son of the Father, and we are children by adoption through faith in Him. *Speaketh in you*. In the great struggle between holiness and sin, men are only God's agents and instruments.

21. <sup>a</sup>And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.—<sup>b</sup>Mi. vii. 6, verses 35, 36.

*Rise up*—as witnesses and opponents. Our Saviour here teaches that such is the enmity of the world against holiness, and the professors of it, that it will overcome and extinguish even the natural affection of the nearest and dearest relations toward each other. Perhaps it was intimated that some of the nearest friends and relatives of the Apostles would become their most bitter persecutors. The nearest are most easily divided. Difference of faith does much to abate true affection. (Jer. ix. 4; Mi. vii. 6; Mark xiii. 12.) Such atrocities as are here recorded have been perpetrated. Religious quarrels, to the shame of mankind, are the fiercest of all others.

22. And he shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: <sup>a</sup>but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. <sup>b</sup>Luke xxi. 17. <sup>c</sup>Dan. xii. 13; chap. xxiv. 13; Mark xiii. 13.

*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 rebels 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.)

*But he that endureth*, &c. In view of their persecution, how important that they should keep in view the *end*, the end of their sufferings and the end of life, and the reward to which their labors and sufferings were tending, if they adhered faithfully to their Master! *Saved*—from the displeasure of God and from condemnation. The word *endureth* implies not only *suffering*, but

being *tried*, and *standing the trial*. "Enduring to the end" is the proper evidence of the reality and solidity of the Christian profession, just as "drawing back unto perdition" exposes the want of foundation.

Such were the warnings Jesus gave His Apostles in sending them forth, yet they voluntarily and cheerfully undertook their commission. How is this to be explained? Is there any instance upon record before this in the annals of the world, where twelve, grave sober men, without any reason, and without being misled by any artifice or delusion whatever, voluntarily exposed themselves at the desire of another person to persecution, torment, and destruction? There must have been some cogent reason for such a conduct as this: and that reason could be nothing less than a full and perfect conviction, arising from the miracles which they saw with their own eyes, and which they themselves were enabled to perform, that Christ was what He pretended to be, the Son of God, that all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth, and that He was able to fulfill the promise He had made them of a recompense in a future life, infinitely surpassing in magnitude and in duration all the sufferings they could experience in the present world. This is the only rational account to be given of their conduct.

23. But <sup>a</sup>when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, <sup>b</sup>until the Son of man be come. <sup>c</sup>Chap. ii. 13, iv. 12, xii. 15; Acts viii. 1, ix. 25, xiv. 6. <sup>d</sup>Or *end*, or *finish*. <sup>e</sup>Chap. xvi. 28.

*This city*—Jesus points in the direction of various cities. The Apostles were not to rush into danger, but, on the other hand, when persecuted in one city, they were, where no great principle was to be abandoned, and no great end to be answered by remaining in the face of persecution and death, to flee to another city of comparative safety, and preach the Gospel. "This flight," says one, "is a *precept* to those who are highly necessary to the Church of Christ, an *advice* to those who might imprudently draw upon themselves persecution, and an *indulgence* for those who are weak." Here are two extremes to be shunned. We are not under the pleas of prudence, so called, to avoid per-

secution, by silence, cowardice, a compromising line of conduct, and letting others alone, alleging that there is no use in trying to do good to such people; this is one extreme. Neither are we to court persecution, by creating needless offense, committing blunders, and stirring up opposition. In every case of flight we must be determined by concern for the best means of spreading the name of Christ. *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, i. e.,* shall not have finished passing through the cities, in order to instruct the people and maintain the cause of your Master.

*Till the Son of man be come.* The Apostles would not have time to visit all the parts of Judea before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, as an instrument in our Lord's hands, which, as a type of His coming to take vengeance on His enemies, is spoken of in a secondary sense, as a *coming* of Christ. (See Matt. xxiv. 27, 37, 39, 44, and Luke xviii. 8.)

24. <sup>a</sup>The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. 25. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If <sup>b</sup>they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more <sup>c</sup>shall they call them of his household? <sup>d</sup>Luke vi. 40; John xiii. 16, xv. 20. <sup>e</sup>Chap. xii. 24; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15; John viii. 43, 52. <sup>f</sup>Gr. *Beelzebub*.

All Christians, but especially ministers, are here taught how unreasonable and absurd it is for them to expect kinder usage from an unkind world than He Himself met with. (1 Peter iv. 12.) The *disciple* is not *above*, in rank and worth, his *master*—Teacher. According to many Jewish proverbs, the pupil of the rabbi was far his inferior. *Nor the servant, &c.*—another parallel maxim which our Lord repeats in various connections. (Luke vi. 40; John xiii. 16, xv. 20.) *It is enough, &c.* He who keeps this saying in his heart will never complain of suffering. *Master of the house*—Jesus was indeed the head of a house, having brought up a large family of disciples, and He is also the Head of the household of the Church. *Beelzebub*. This word, which signifies “the lord of flies,” and is the Greek form of Baal-zebub, was the name of a god worshipped by the Philistines in earlier times, at Ekron (2 Kings i. 2), and so called as protecting his worshipers from noxious insects, or as being himself worshiped under an insect form. Christ was re-

peatedly charged with being in league with Satan as Beelzebub (chap. xii. 24, ix. 34; Mark iii. 30; John vii. 20); how *much more*, then, might His disciples expect to encounter the same vile epithet and charge?

26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known.—<sup>a</sup>Mark iv. 22; Luke viii. 17, xii. 2, 3.

*Therefore*—although you shall be hated, &c., be not afraid of your enemies, since you have my example, suffer in my cause, and are assured that I will support you, till you have finished your testimony. *For there is nothing covered, &c.* “Your excellence and worth, the truth of your cause, and the purity of your motives, your faithfulness in dispensing the truth, and patience in suffering for it, though concealed by the smoke of present persecution, yet shall ultimately and thoroughly be revealed and made known.” Truth will triumph, and the character of its advocates be vindicated. (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6; 1 Cor. iv. 5.)

27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops.

<sup>a</sup>Luke viii. 10; John xvi. 13, 25; 2 Cor. iii. 12.

In view of the coming development of Christianity, and the certainty that their integrity would in due time be made known and acknowledged, whatever the Apostles had conveyed to them under a figure, *that* were they without a figure to preach to all: what they had been taught secretly, *that* were they openly to proclaim: what they had heard in a corner of Judea, *that* were they to make known all over the world. Both Christ and His Apostles at first spake privately, for fear of the Jews, and the weakness and peril of their cause. The roofs of the houses in the East were nearly flat, and surrounded with a balustrade, so that men might there converse, and even an audience assemble. Preaching on the house-tops is a figure for the most public declaration. At the present day in Palestine, local governors in country districts cause their commands to be thus published.

28. <sup>a</sup>And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

<sup>b</sup>Isa. viii. 12, 13; Luke xii. 4.

*Fear not them.* Thus is forbidden the sinful, servile, slavish fear of impotent man, which was just condemned. He does



not hold out to them deliverance from death, but encourages them to despise it, which is a much greater thing than to be rescued from it. The words *which kill the body* show that the body may be dead, and the soul alive. *Body—soul.* We have here two parts of man's compounded nature placed in contrast. *But rather fear him—* act as in the presence of, and under a sense of responsibility to, *him which is able, &c.* The fear of man bringeth a snare, but we must make it give way to the expulsive power of a stronger principle, even the fear of God. "I fear God," said *Colonel Gardiner*, "and therefore there is none else that I need fear." We ought to fear God, not only for His greatness and goodness, but also for His punitive justice, as having ability and authority *to destroy both soul and body in hell.* To *destroy* is not 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. It is here evident that the torment that awaits the lost will have elements of suffering adapted to the *material* as well as the spiritual part of our nature.

*In hell.* (See v. 22.) 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* (see 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6), which is the word translated "hell" in the verse now before us, also in

Matt. v. 22, 29, 30, xviii. 9, xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke xii. 5; 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. See also Matt. viii. 12, xiii. 42, xxii. 13, xxv. 30; Luke xvi. 24; Jude 13; Rev. xiv. 10, 11, xix. 20, xx. 14, xxi. 8.) The Valley of Hinnom (Josh. xv. 8) literally means a gorge south of Jerusalem, running east and west, and intersecting the Kedron at the southeast corner of the city. At this place the idolatrous Israelites burnt human sacrifices unto Moloch, a deity represented by a brass image with the face of a bull. The drum (*toph*) which was used to drown the cry of the victim, gave the place the name of *Tophet*. (Jer. xix. 6.) Here also the offals of the city were ordinarily burned. The name of this ancient, defiled, gloomy, and perpetually fiery recess, became to the Jewish mind the emblem, and the word became the name, of the perpetual fire of retribution in a world to come. Universalists mainly maintain their heresy by the sophism that this Valley of Hinnom was the only hell. But the present text demonstrates that beyond the death of the body, and therefore in a future state, there is a hell or gehenna, which the soul may suffer, more terrible than bodily death, and more to be feared than any evil that man can inflict. God is the author of that evil, it lies beyond death, it is executed upon the soul as well as the body.

29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>†</sup> 1 Sam. xiv. 45; 2 Sam. xiv. 11; Luke xii. 6, 7, xxi. 18; Acts xxvii. 34.

Our Lord still further encourages them to rely upon Divine protection, by the doctrine of Providence; and not only would He establish the truth, but the *extent* of it. He has two references. One is taken from themselves—the numbering of the hairs of their heads, which they cared so little about. What could express more strongly the minuteness of Providence? The other, from the *sparrow*—the little bird which was sold for an *assarion*, a

Roman coin, equal to one and a half cents of our money—and which could not fall on the ground, exhausted or killed, without the knowledge and consent of God. Of how much *more value* than these little birds, with their instinct, are ye as men in whom there is a spirit, and to whom the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding, and especially as *Christians*, ransomed with a price of infinite value, the temples of the living God, partakers of the Divine nature, and honored with a most important mission? *Fear ye not therefore* (how natural and unavoidable the inference) that God, who takes care of these His *creatures*, which are but animated forms, and perishable, will not take care of you, who are His *children*, with your undying souls.

A general providence involves a particular. It were an inconsistent belief that the mass were in God's hands, whilst the atom was left to chance. We must believe all chance, or else all God. He rules and governs in little things, and in order that He may rule in great things. His providence descends to the minute particles of dust in the summer gale; he numbers the gnats in the sunshine, and the fishes in the sea. While it controls the mighty orbs that shine in heaven, it deals with the drop that trickles from the eye. This particularity of Providence exalts, instead of debases, God. He acts in every thing without growing weary, and is sufficient for every thing, without multiplying Himself. It has been truthfully remarked that "not till belief in these declarations of our Lord, in their most literal sense, becomes the calm and settled habit of the soul, is life ever redeemed from drudgery and dreary emptiness, and made full of interest, meaning, and divine significance." We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. (Rom. viii. 28.)

32. \*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33. \*But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

34. \*Luke xii. 8; Rom. x. 9, 10. \*Rev. iii. 5. \*Mark viii. 38; Luke ix. 26; 2 Tim. ii. 12.

Another reason is here given for discharging their commission without fear of man, viz.: that on their fidelity in so doing

must depend their treatment by Him who commissioned them. *Whosoever*, whether of yourselves who preach, or those who hear your preaching. *Shall confess me before men, i. e.*, in this present life. To confess Jesus Christ is to own Him as Lord and Master, to follow His precept and example, to suffer for His sake, to love, teach, and practice His doctrine. We refer this great truth to the times of the martyrs, because we will not ourselves be martyrs for the truth. It belongs to all times and all believers, every one in his proper way. (See Rom. x. 10.)

*Him will I confess also*, &c. The reciprocal act here ascribed to Christ is that of owning as His Apostle, disciple or follower. The time referred to here, as well as in the next verse, must doubtless be the day of judgment. (See Heb. vii. 25; John xvii. 9.)

*But whosoever shall deny*, &c. Christ may be denied, 1. Doctrinally, by an erroneous and heretical judgment; 2. Verbally, by oral expressions; 3. Vitally, by a wicked and unholy life. (See Titus i. 16.) 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. Let it be observed, 1. That not to confess Christ is in His account to deny Him; 2. That whosoever shall deny Him, shall be disowned and eternally rejected by Him. "He shall have from me his own treatment of me on the earth." (2 Tim. ii. 12.) How dreadful must be the portion of that soul which Jesus denies and renounces! He will refuse to acknowledge it; He will not plead for it, but leave it to reap the consequences of its unbelief or cowardice, renouncing it to the devil whom it chose for its master. It is worthy of notice, that both here and in the Sermon on the Mount (chap. vii. 21–23), the Saviour, *after mention of the Father*, describes *Himself* as the Judge and Arbitrator of eternal life and death.

34. \*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword.

\*Luke xii. 49, 51–53.

*Think not*. The words imply a disposition so to think, or imagine, and act accordingly—that is, to infer from the meekness of Christ's character and His Gospel, that He was to send *peace*, not only in *spirit*, but in *result*, among mankind. *A sword*,

an emblem of contention. We must here remember the difference between a *cause* and an *occasion*. A hospital is the *cause* of healing to the sick; this is its direct object, but in the course of its erection it may be the *occasion* of the loss of life to several workmen. So, too, we say, a missionary went to such a place to *die*, when his object was to preach the Gospel. In like manner we must distinguish between the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental effect of it. His 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—abnormal consequences of men's alienation and resistance. Strife is not referred to as something good and desirable in itself, but as the only way in which Jesus could erect His kingdom of peace here below upon an immovable foundation. When the Holy One of God comes into 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.)

35. For I am come to set a man at variance <sup>2</sup>against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. <sup>36</sup> And <sup>37</sup>a man's foes <sup>shall be</sup> they of his own household.

<sup>2</sup>Mt. vii. 7; Luke xii. 53. <sup>3</sup>Ps. xii. 9, lv. 13; Mt. vii. 6; John xiii. 18.

*For I am come, &c.* (See notes on verse 34.) It may be that these special terms were selected because the younger members and the female portion of households were commonly the first to embrace the Gospel. The plain lesson here taught, is, 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 at variance with 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 arrays 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. (See notes on verse 21.)

*The variance* here referred to in the domestic circle is a variance, not upon some question of ecclesiastical economy, but about *vital religion*. And even such a division may be much mitigated by the forbearance, tenderness, and gentleness of those who are in the right, in dealing with those who are clearly in the wrong. We should do everything, except compromise duty and living truth, in order to promote peace. *A man's foes, &c.* (See Ps. xli. 9, lv. 12-14; Mt. vii. 6.) This saying had its most affecting illustration in the treason of Judas against our Lord Himself. (John xiii. 18; Matt. xxvi. 48-50.)

37. <sup>1</sup>He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.—Luke xiv. 26.

Love to Christ, in order to be genuine, must be supreme; earthly affections, when they come into collision with His claims, must be postponed. 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*. Without such a spirit no one can be His disciple. How could Jesus, except as God-man, claim this supreme affection. *Is not worthy of me* does not refer to the meritorious character of the action, but to the qualification of the person.

38. <sup>1</sup>And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

<sup>2</sup>Chap. xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23, xiv. 27.

*Taketh not his cross.* This means *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 have the *spirit* of a martyr and to be *ready* to give up all things, even life itself, for

Jesus. *Followeth not after me.* This denotes *gospel-service*. We must obey Christ's commands and imitate His example. We must set His life and doctrine continually before us, and be steadily correcting and reforming our lives by that rule and pattern.

39. <sup>b</sup>He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.  
<sup>c</sup>Chap. xvi. 25; Luke ix. 24, xvii. 33; John xii. 25.

These, or similar words, were spoken on other occasions, as is shown by the references at the close of the verse. The word translated *life*, signifies both life and the soul. 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, be said to *find* it? The meaning of this apparently paradoxical expression is, he who preserves his life and temporal advantages at the expense of his religion, his conscience and regard to Christ, shall lose upon the whole, in a higher sense than he has retained it, as he will thus incur a sentence of final condemnation and destruction; but he who risks or loses his temporal life, or the enjoyments of it, through his conscientious adherence to the truth and faithfulness to Christ, shall find real comfort and happiness therein, and be graciously rewarded in the world to come with eternal life, the highest measure of the highest life of which man is capable.

40. <sup>c</sup>He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.  
<sup>d</sup>Chap. xviii. 5; Luke ix. 48, x. 16; John xii. 44, xiii. 20; Gal. iv. 14.

It would cheer the Apostles to learn that some would regard them with favor. There is here a descending gradation, *you Apostles, a prophet, a righteous man, a little one*. The vital union, subsisting between Christ and His followers, rendering every act of love exercised toward them the same as done to Him, is here asserted in the fullest and most explicit terms. The union between Christ and the Father is also affirmed. "Your authority is mine, as mine is my Father's." Men may think it no great matter not to receive or neglect the message and the messengers of Christ, but this neglect or rejection extends beyond them to Christ Himself who gave them their commission, and beyond Him to God the Father, who gave Him His com-

mission; accordingly ministers are called God's mouth (Jer. xv. 19), their message and their mission being both from Him. Jesus observes who is kind to His servants, as Lydia was to Paul, and who throw difficulties in their way, as Diotrophes did to John.

41. <sup>d</sup>He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward: and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.  
<sup>e</sup>1 Kings xvii. 10, xviii. 4; 2 Kings iv. 8.

He that hospitably entertains a *prophet*, a divinely-authorized religious teacher, *in the name of a prophet*, because he is such, from sympathy with him, and a pious regard to the office he bears, *shall receive a prophet's reward*; or a reward proportionable to the worth of the person he shelters and accommodates in time of danger and difficulty, and the assistance rendered him in fulfilling his office as an ambassador of Christ. And he that entertains a *righteous man*, a pious man of private life, *in the name of a righteous man*, because he is such, or with a cordial regard to the virtues of his character, shall himself receive the reward of a righteous man. Being one in obedience with the prophet and righteous man whom we receive, according to the voice of the one, and the acting of the other, verily we shall with them share the reward. The allusion may be to the benefits derived by some from the visits of Elijah and Elisha, not to similar rewards, but still great ones.

42. <sup>e</sup>And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.  
<sup>f</sup>Chap. xviii. 5, 6, xxv. 40; Mark ix. 41; 1Ieb. vi. 10.

*Little ones.* A sweet epithet for *disciples*. They were so called to denote their want of wealth, rank, learning, and whatever the world calls *great*. They were *little* in the estimation of the world, and in their own estimation, and they made no pretensions to what attracts the admiration of mankind. *A cup of cold water.* Among the varied scenes into which the prosecution of their missionary labors would throw them, they might meet with many who, from mere sympathy or kindness, might be disposed to refresh the weary travelers and offer them the shelter and hospitality of their homes, but few would be equally ready to extend their generous offices from

regard to the cause of religion and to the glory of God; and yet so much more excellent and praiseworthy was the conduct of the latter, that they would be rewarded with the special blessing of heaven, even though opportunity or means might prevent their giving a more liberal contribution to the comfort of a disciple than the offer of a cup of cold water. *In the name,*

&c.—because he is a disciple. *He shall in no wise lose, &c.* Marvelous promise! A cup of cold water in time, to find its reward, as one of old says, “in a sea of pleasure,” throughout the ages of eternity. There is here no shadow of the denial of the doctrine of justification by faith, but an assertion that works *in faith* are graciously rewarded of God.

1. What power did Jesus give to “his twelve disciples?” 2. Repeat the names of the Twelve Apostles. 3. State something of the history of each of them. 4. What were their two grand characteristics? 5. To whom were the Apostles first sent? 6. What directions were given to them? 7. Explain those directions. 8. What is said concerning Sodom and Gomorrah? 9. What is said of him who “endureth to the end?” 10. Explain verse 23. 11. Why were not the Apostles to fear their persecutors? 12. Why were they to “rather fear” God? 13. What doctrine is taught in verses 29-31? 14. What is said of confessing Christ? 15. What of denying Him? 16. Explain verses 34, 35? 17. Who is not “worthy” of Christ? 18. What is said about “finding” and “losing” “life?” 19. How does Jesus reward kindness to His servants?

## CHAPTER XI.

2 *John sendeth his disciples to Christ, 7 Christ's testimony concerning John, 18 The opinion of the people, both concerning John and Christ, 20 Christ upbraideth the unthankfulness and unrepentance of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum: 25 and praising his Father's wisdom in revealing the gospel to the simple, 28 he caddeth to him all such as feel the burden of their sins.*

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

*Made an end of commanding.* Christ's commissions imply commands. His instructions are ever full, thorough. By not ceasing from His labors, while the Apostles were absent, He gave an example of that faithful service in the Gospel which He required from them. All should be equally diligent to exemplify in their conduct the instructions which, from Him, they communicate to the people. *To teach, instruct in private, to preach in public. Their cities*—the cities of the Jews in Galilee.

2. \*Now when John had heard <sup>bin</sup> in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, 3. And said unto him, Art thou <sup>he</sup> that should come, or do we look for another?

\*Luke vii. 13, 19, &c. <sup>b</sup>Chap. xiv. 3. <sup>c</sup>Gen. xlix. 10; Num. xxiv. 17; Dan. ix. 24; John vi. 14.

*The works of Christ, i. e.,* His miracles, as appears from verses 3-5. Jesus had done such works before John's incarceration, but oftener after it, and these were re-

ported to him by his disciples, who seem to have had free access to him. *Art thou he that should come, &c.* This question shows that the Jews generally considered the Messiah as at hand, and if Jesus were not He, another must be expected. Nearly nineteen hundred years have elapsed, and no other has come. How can they evade the inference that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah? Some suppose that this message was sent by John for his own satisfaction. If so, the utmost we can suppose concerning him, after remembering the clear evidence he had received of the Messiahship of Jesus (Matt. iii. 16), and the express and repeated testimonies he had borne to this truth (John i. 29, 36, 30, 34), and the high encomium pronounced on him when his disciples left (verses 9, 11) is, that whilst not doubting the Saviour's person, he could not fully understand His mode of acting. Cut off from intercourse with society by being shut up in prison, his mind was in danger of being warped, and of looking at things on the dark side. He was somewhat impatient. Matters moved too slowly for him, especially as he, as a prisoner, was now condemned to involuntary inactivity.

His misgivings were not in their nature *skeptical*, but *anxious*. 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 hand. (Matt. iii. 12.)

Others regard the message as having been sent *for the sake of John's disciples*. They were somewhat 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 (according to those who maintain this view) 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.

4. Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5. *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* 6. And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

<sup>a</sup>Isa. xxix. 18, xxxv. 4, 5, 6, xlii. 7; John ii. 23, iii. 2, v. 36, x. 25, 38, xiv. 11. <sup>b</sup>Ps. xxii. 23; Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18; James ii. 5. <sup>c</sup>Isa. viii. 14, 15; chap. xiii. 57, xxiv. 10, xxvi. 31; Rom. ix. 32, 33; 1 Cor. i. 23, ii. 14; Gal. v. 11; 1 Peter ii. 8.

Christ did not return a direct answer to their question. He endeavors to convince them, not by words, but by works. He performs several miracles, and leaves them to draw the proper inference. (Comp. the raising of Jairus' daughter, and of the widow's son at Nain, which, in the Gospel of Luke, immediately precedes this embassy. Luke vii. 11, 18.) *Those things which ye do hear and see*, with the reports of which the whole country rang and of which a specification is made in the next 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—not by pretension but by demonstration.

*The blind receive their sight, &c.* Here Jesus not only makes a tacit appeal to His miracles, but also alludes to the prophecies in which the same things are predicted of the Messiah. (Isa. xxxv. 4, 5, 6, lxi. 1.) Miracles were the more striking to John's disciples as he "did no miracle." (John x. 41.) *The poor have the gospel preached to them.* This is mentioned last, as the greatest effort of Divine goodness. It was a sign of the Messiah's times. (Isa. xxix. 19.) The poor were despised in the times of Christ. The teachers of His day sought popularity and the favor of the rich. (John vii. 49, ix. 34, and James ii. 24.) But Christ aims first at the poor. A tender interest for them was shown by Him and His Apostles. It is the duty of the Church, and will be so the end of time, to see that the Gospel is preached to the poor. They have ever been more disposed than other men to hear and embrace the truth as it is in Jesus.

*And blessed is he, &c.* This was added to correct the absurd emulation of John's disciples. (See on verse 4.) *Not be offended, not stumbled.* Many are offended in Christ, some, at the asserted Divinity of His person, and the meritoriousness of His satisfaction, some 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 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.

7. <sup>a</sup>And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitude concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? <sup>b</sup>A reed shaken with the wind? 8. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses. 9. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

<sup>c</sup>Luke vii. 24. <sup>d</sup>Eph. iv. 14. <sup>e</sup>Chap. xiv. 5, xxi. 26; Luke i. 76, vii. 26.

As soon as John's disciples had started back to their master, Jesus proceeded to address the people, and this, mainly to remove the unfavorable impression which the question from the Baptist (verse 3) had made on the crowd, but also to anticipate further difficulties conceived as to His own person and work, as well as to show them what benefit they *ought* to have received from John's ministry. John, whom they had gone out into the wilderness of Judea to hear preach, was not like one of the reeds which lined the banks of the Jordan and shivered in the breezes that swept it—not as easily shaken as themselves by every gust of rumor or prejudice, or every change of outward circumstances. Convinced of the truth, he continued to believe and assert it. *Steadiness* is essentially necessary to every preacher, and to every private Christian. We should have an *end* in view in repairing to the ordinances of religion, and that should not be curiosity, or criticism and cavilling, or any outward advantage, such as business, reputation, &c., or the quieting of conscience, but to obtain the conversion of the soul to God, to gain all needful instruction, to have divine things re-applied and re-impressed, and also to aid in upholding the public means of grace for the advantage of others.

*A man clothed in soft raiment?* John is also commended for his unselfishness, *gravity, sobriety*—high measure of mortification to the world—its glory, honor, ease, and pleasures. 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.

*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 *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. Thus John's *humility* was commended. He might have been what he would; the people were ready to take him for the Messiah, but he denied that he was the Christ, and only wished to be regarded as His forerunner, willing, but not worthy, to do Him service.

10. For this is *he* of whom it is written, \*Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

<sup>1</sup>Mal. iii. 1; Mark i. 2; Luke i. 76, vii. 27.

The reason why John was to be accounted greater than any prophet that had preceded him is here given. He was a *messenger*, nay, even *the messenger before the Messiah's face*. *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*."

11. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.—See Luke vii. 28.

Jesus here affirms that among the whole race of mankind in all former ages, there was not a greater prophet than John. He 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, his being honored with baptizing Him, 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. 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!

*Notwithstanding he that is least, &c.* As the word *greater*, in this verse, refers to the word *prophet*, which is implied (see Luke vii. 28), so here the same idea is intended—*he that is a very inferior prophet, or religious teacher*. The humblest Gospel 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 even John himself. At the same time, it is true that the weakest believing hearers of Paul would understand things by the light of Christ's death on the cross, which the Baptist could never have explained, and all who have believed in a crucified Saviour have, through the light of the experience of His redeeming power, had deeper insight into the nature, blessings, and course of development of the kingdom of God, than was the portion of John. How great the privilege, and consequently the responsibility, of enjoying the Gospel.

12. <sup>1</sup>And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.—<sup>2</sup>Luke xvi. 16.

The great commendation of John was that God owned his ministry and made it wonderfully successful. With his ministry the new dispensation began to be introduced, and, though disregarded by many who might have been expected to avail themselves of its blessings, yet from *his days*, or first appearing, *until now* (not much more than two years), great good had been done, many, most unlikely to do so, earnestly sought admission into the kingdom, and the motion became quicker when it came near to Christ the centre. (See Matt. iii. 5, 4, viii. 1, ix. 36, iv. 23-25.) *Suffereth violence*. By the *violent* may be understood either publicans and sinners, &c., or else those who are pressed with ardent desire to be partakers of the kingdom, and in the words, *take it by force*, which signify literally, *seize and take it*, as when men seize and drag away the plunder of a sacked city, we have a strong expression

of the eager joy with which men, in the times here spoken of, thronged to hear from John and Jesus the words of salvation. (See John vi. 15, x. 28, 29.) Happy are they who by a holy violence secure an interest in the kingdom of heaven.

13. <sup>1</sup>For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14. And if ye will receive it, this is <sup>2</sup>Elias, which was to come. 15. <sup>3</sup>He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

<sup>4</sup>Mal. iv. 6. <sup>5</sup>Mal. iv. 5; chap. xvii. 12; Luke i. 17. <sup>6</sup>Chap. xiii. 9; Luke viii. 8; Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29, iii. 6, 13, 22.

Here is still a further commendation of John. He was the connecting link between the Law and the Gospel. (See Luke i. 17; Mark i. 1; also Acts i. 22.) *The prophets and the law prophesied*. There were prophets also before Moses, and the law being named second, there is a climax, for Moses was the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. The law is mentioned here on account of its prophetic office. *Until John*—continued to instruct concerning Christ. Here was the limit of prophecy and of the Old Testament dispensation; thenceforward is the fulfillment.

*If ye will receive it*. This may mean that Jesus knew that many would not believe what He was now declaring (which is rendered probable by the obstinate expectation of the Jews to this day, that Elias is personally to come), or, that God constrains not the will, but leaves men free to act as they choose. *This is Elias, &c.* Our Lord here affirms that John was the Elijah spoken of by Malachi iv. 5. John was not Elijah himself, but he had come in the *spirit and power* of Elijah, being fervent in spirit and great in power, turning sinners to the Lord.

*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. An expression often used by Christ to evoke attention, or to mark a conclusion from certain premises. (Comp. chap. xiii. 9, 43; Rev. ii. 7.) In the present instance, the inference was obvious—if John was the person to whom the law and the prophets pointed as the forerunner of the Messiah, then Jesus was evidently that personage, and was to be received and obeyed as such.

16. <sup>1</sup>But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows. 17. And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. 18. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. 19. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, <sup>2</sup>a friend of publicans and sinners. <sup>3</sup>But wisdom is justified of her children.

<sup>4</sup>Luke vii. 31. <sup>5</sup>Chap. ix. 10. <sup>6</sup>Luke vii. 35.



*Whereunto shall I liken, &c.* Our Lord now proceeds to describe and condemn the fickleness and perverseness of the Jews. *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. In the time of our Saviour it was common for children to play in the market-place at rejoicing and at mourning. One party 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 their 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 forward children would object to this play also. In a matter of infinite importance the Pharisees had imitated this example. As John 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. Then 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. An unbelieving world is equally hard to please in regard to Christians. Are they cheerful? It accuses them of levity. Are they grave? It calls them gloomy and sour. Do they keep aloof from vain, worldly amusements? It calls them puritanical, exclu-

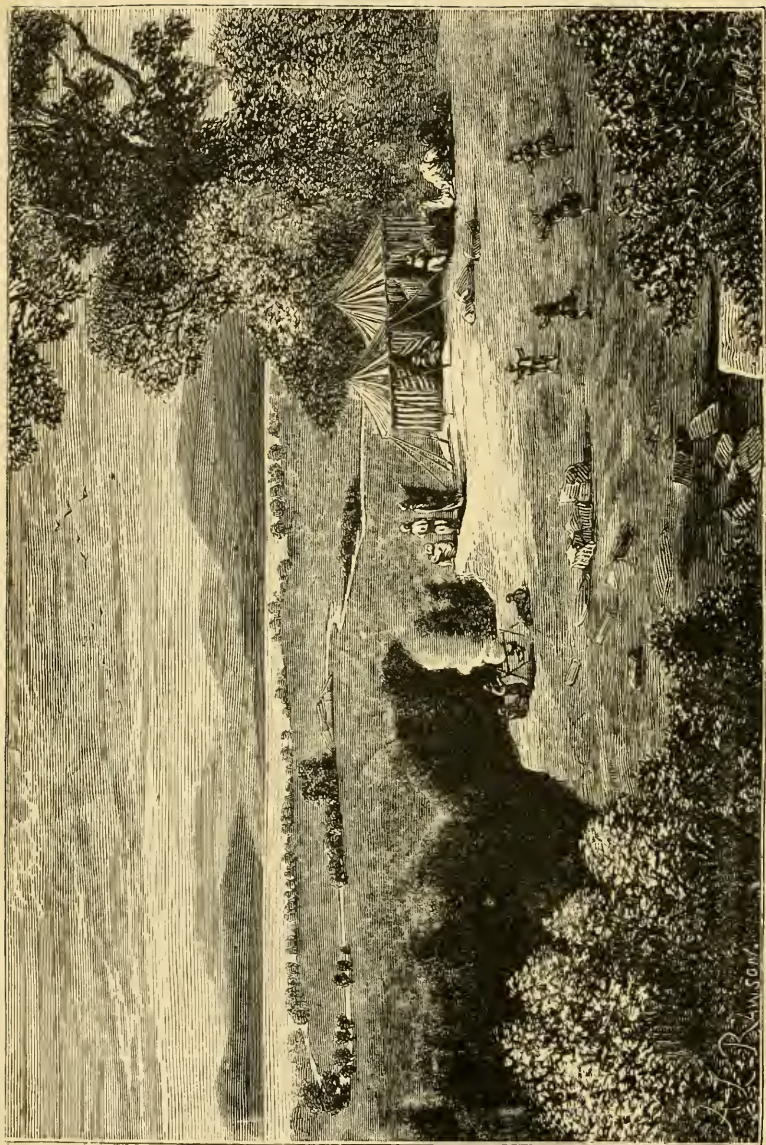
sive and narrow-minded. Do they eat, drink and dress like other people, and attend to their worldly callings and go into society? It sneeringly insinuates that it sees no difference between them and those who make no profession at all.

*But wisdom is justified of 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 admire the beautiful variety in the conduct of Providence, and in the methods of revealing Divine grace, approve religion in their judgment, honor it in their conversation, and adorn it in their lives. It is the duty of ministers to seek to please all men for their good; but after all their efforts to please all, if they strenuously oppose the errors and vices of the times, they shall please but very few. It is the old and settled policy of the devil to hinder the success of the Gospel, if he can, by exciting prejudice against ministers.

20. ¶ \*Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22. But I say unto you, ¶It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24. But I say unto you, ¶That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. †Luke x. 13, &c. †John iii. 7, 8. †Chap. x. 15; verse 24. †See Isa. xiv. 13; Lam. ii. 1. †Chap. x. 15.

The connection of this with what precedes, and the similarity of its tone, makes it highly probable that it was delivered on the same occasion. *Then began he*—He had not done this before. *To upbraid*, rebuke, reprove. *The cities*—the inhabitants of them. *Woe unto thee*, better, *alas for thee*, an exclamation of pity, no less than an announcement of wrath. Its opposite is *blessed*. *Chorazin. . . . Bethsaida*. There is no reason to doubt that these towns were situated on or near the shore of the Lake of Gennesareth, but the exact location has been much in dispute. *Mighty works*. Our Lord here assumes that miracles performed in the name of God are





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proof of a Divine commission. *Because they repented not.* There were doubtless many who believed on Jesus, but the mass remained in a state of impenitence and unbelief. Christ's great design in His doctrines and miracles was to bring men to repentance, to forsake their sins.

*Tyre and Sidon.* Two well-known maritime and Gentile cities in Syria or Palestine, remarkable for pride, luxury, and contempt of religion, situated on the shore of the Mediterranean sea: into them it does not appear that Christ ever went, though often very near to them. (See Matt. xv. 21; Mark vii. 24.) Against these two cities Ezekiel prophesies. (xxxviii.) They are now little better than ruins. *For if the mighty works, which were done in you, &c.* Jesus affirms that if the mighty works done by Him in Chorazin and Bethsaida, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, even they, wicked as they were, would have long ago, *i. e.*, of old, abandoned their idolatrous and other sinful habits, and like Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, *would have repented, &c.* In the East it was common for mourners to put on a garment of coarse black cloth (usually made of hair), which resembled a sack, with holes for the arms, and to strew ashes upon the head. Hence this was regarded as the symbol of mourning and repentance.

The words of our Lord are remarkable as revealing the extent of the Divine Omniscience. God knows not only *what will be*, but, (which seems stranger) *what would have been*, under certain conditions. The Saviour here used the language of common life, just as we, if we were speaking of a person who had abused exalted privileges, might select, in order to show our sense of his guilt, the most wicked individual of our acquaintance, and say, even *he* would have acted in a better manner, even *he* could not have withstood such privileges; meaning that such a result in his case might have been reasonably expected. We are not competent to solve every difficulty in this subject, or fully to understand it. Certainly some are more easily wrought on than others, and it aggravates the impenitence of those who have plentiful means of grace, not only that many who enjoy the same are wrought on, but that

many more, who enjoy less, would be wrought on if they enjoyed the same means. (Ezek. iii. 6, 7.)

*But I say unto you, &c.* (See on chapter x. 15.) Sinners are but reserved for punishment. Tyre and Sidon seem to us gone by, but to God it is far otherwise. Time makes no change in His purposes. *Thou, Capernaum.* This was a prosperous city, where Christ had chiefly resided after His entrance upon His public ministry. It was *exalted unto heaven*, as it had, by our Lord's presence, preaching and miracles, enjoyed privileges far above other places. *Shall be brought down to hell.* In this case, the words *heaven* and *hell* correspond to one another as our words *high* and *low*. As the people of Capernaum were elevated on high by religious advantages so, through a neglect or abuse of their advantages, they were exposed to the condemnation of being cast down to an exceedingly low condition of misery—a condition as sad as that of the worst of men. The higher a people rise under the means of grace, the lower they fall, if they misimprove their privileges. *Of the mighty works, &c.* (See on verse 21.) *It would have remained until this day*—Sodom, destroyed for its pollutions, would have continued until that time—having done no such violence to conscience, and so incurred unspeakably less guilt. Repentance on the part of a nation averts its ruin. *But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable, &c.* (See on chap. x. 15.) "It has been indeed," says *Dr. Stanley*, "more tolerable, in one sense, in the day of its earthly judgment, for the land of Sodom than for Capernaum: for the name, and perhaps the remains of Sodom are still to be found on the shores of the Dead Sea: whilst that of Capernaum has, on the Lake of Gennesareth, been utterly lost." In the world of woe, their condemnation would be severer than that of many others, than that even of guilty Sodom.

Note, 1. The enjoyment of Gospel ordinances is a great honor to the obscurest people and place. 2. It is not alone the seeing of miracles that is necessary to convert souls. 3. Man is accountable for his belief, and not believing the Gospel is a sin which leads to hell as really as not keeping the ten commandments. 4. They

that have been nearest conversion, being not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged. 5. Cities are difficult fields for the spiritual laborer to cultivate. They are so on account of vice prevailing so extensively in them in its producing causes and sad effects, the pressure of business, and also because they unite the extremes of population—the low, sunken and degraded, whom the Gospel cannot reach, and the gay, giddy and godless, for whom it has no attraction. 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. (See on chap. x. 15.)

25. \*At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because 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.

<sup>1</sup>Luke x. 21. <sup>2</sup>See Ps. viii. 2; 1 Cor. i. 19, 27 and ii. 8; 2 Cor. iii. 14. <sup>3</sup>Chap. xvi. 17.

At that time. And doubtless in the same connection. *Jesus answered and said.* This form of expression is adapted to the train of thought which ran through the preceding discourse. *I thank thee, O Father,* &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 those who *thought themselves wise and prudent*, refusing either to submit their understanding to God’s teaching, or to seek His guidance unto truth, and depending on their own reason and resources, and at the same time to reveal these mysteries *unto babes*—i. e., to those like little children in being meek, teachable and lovely—conscious of their own ignorance, open to receive truth, and willing <sup>to</sup> be guided by it.

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, being the choice and good pleasure of thy wisdom.”

The truth which this verse embodies is deep and mysterious. Why some are converted and others remain dead in sins, why America is a Christian country and India is buried in idolatry, we cannot fully understand. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ supply the only answer that mortal man can or ought to give: “Even so, Father,” &c. 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. 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.

27. \*All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xxviii. 18; Luke x. 22; John iii. 35, xlii. 3 and xvii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 27. <sup>2</sup>John i. 18, vi. 46 and x. 15.

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* work. In His *mediatorial* office His authority is a delegated one. The Father had *delivered all things unto him*—the whole system of salvation, all power, authority and judgment over all creatures, and He is even to be regarded as the source of light and knowledge, as well as of peace and pardon to the souls of men. None knew Jesus as the Son of God—“the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh”—but the eternal Father, even as none knew the Father, except the Son, neither could any

man truly know the Father, *i. e.*, the depths of His attributes, 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 mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son represents Christ as co-equal with the Father, and is an argument for His Divinity. Jesus is the light; we must walk after Him, if we would not wander in darkness; we must wash in His blood if we would be cleansed and made ready for the great day of account. If we have Christ, we have all things. (1 Cor. iii. 22.)

28. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

After upbraiding the cities wherein most of His mighty works had been done, because they repented not, and then stating the great truth that divine grace is sovereign, so as to humble the proud, our Lord, seeing the disciples crowding around the rabbi, submitting to their severe discipline in order to the attainment of spiritual good, and seeing the people performing costly ceremonies, and wearying themselves to get free from the load of guilt and fear which still pressed heavily upon them, proceeded, from pity to them, to utter this most gracious invitation, offering to them rest in forgiveness and a quiet mind, in a heart chastened to a holy calm, and in the hope of heaven. What Jesus promised *then*, he has both promised and fulfilled ever since from heaven.

Notice, 1. What he promises—*Rest*. Rest from the guilt of sin, a pacified and quiet conscience; rest from the power and misery of sin, by the Spirit's causing us to be crucified to the world and weaned from it, to live, in fact, above it; rest from speculative doubts; rest in trouble, not *from* it, but *in* it, by delivering us from self-will, unbelief and impatience; rest in heaven, after life's toils and conflicts are over. 2. To whom this rest is promised. Every one who desires or needs it; they that *labor and are heavy laden*, and *all* of them; those who are weary in seeking their happiness away from God; those who are bearing the heavy burden of affliction, and the still heavier burden of guilt; those who are attempting to establish their peace with God, and are laboring to erect

an edifice of righteousness out of their own performances. 3. That it is *Jesus* by whom this promise is made. It is the great prerogative of Him who made the soul to impart rest to it. Our Lord here claims this high prerogative of Jehovah for Himself. He does not say, as the prophets of old did, "Turn to the Lord, and the Lord will comfort you," but "Come unto me," *I will give you rest*. Jesus is the source of all happiness, the spring from which flows all the bliss of heaven, and He has all hearts at his command, and can fill them with comfort and joy. "God has so made man's heart for Himself," says *Augustine*, "that it is ever restless until it finds rest in Him."

4. How this rest is to be obtained. By *coming to Christ*. The burdened soul must seek its rest in Him, just as the worldly man seeks his in worldly things. Coming to Christ is the same as believing on Him, but then it is faith in operation, leading the soul to act on what it credits. It is not a *local* coming, which at present is impossible, but a movement of mind and heart unto Him, with a true consent to His doctrine, a hearty and sincere trust in His merits, and such resignation to His guidance as is due to the nature of His character and doctrine.

29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

John xiii. 15; Phil. ii. 5; 1 Peter ii. 21; 1 John ii. 6; Zech. ix. 9; Phil. ii. 7, 8; Jer. vi. 16.

*Take my yoke upon you*. We are to come to Jesus also as our *Ruler*. He has His yoke. 1. This includes conditions which His religion requires, such as exclusive trust in the merits of His death as the sacrifice for sin, self-denial and submission to affliction and suffering as in His wisdom He may appoint. 2. Restraints under His discipline, in temper and conduct, being meek, forgiving, merciful and kind, and "walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." 3. Services which He requires—the services of devotion, of zeal, and of charity. *Learn of me*. We are also to come to Christ as our *Teacher*, sitting at His feet, renouncing all but Him, the teacher sent from God. And what encouragement does He give us to do this? He tells us that He is *meek and lowly in heart*. He will not teach us severely, but be gentle toward

us, even as a nurse unto her children. His gentle spirit and soul-subduing doctrines, can alone give that temper by which the *soul* of man may come to its true rest. *And ye shall find rest unto your souls*—an emphatic repetition of the last clause of the preceding verse. Another ground of encouragement is given us in the following verse :

30. <sup>b</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.  
<sup>b1</sup> John v. 3.

Christ's yoke is easy because, 1. No rest can be found by rejecting it. The man who bears it not must bear a heavier burden—the burden of bewildering and oppressive ignorance or skepticism. 2. Those who bear it have received a willing mind to do so. 3. Bearing it brings with it the sense of the approbation of God. 4. It conforms to the nature and reality of things. 5. There is a pure satisfaction imparted to the mind, even in the very ex-

ercises of self-denial and self-abasement which Christ enjoins. 6. His presence is promised to those who bear His yoke. 7. It becomes easier as the Christian continues to bear it. 8. The intimate connection between every branch of discipline and the heavenly state, crowns the whole. The Christian knows that he is learning of Jesus to be prepared to find Him his wisdom in eternity; that he is fleeing to His sacrifice in order to overcome death and enter into glory; that he is denying himself to gain the relish for the spiritualities of heaven; that he is cultivating holiness in order to be presented without spot, before God; that he is worshiping Jesus here to be made meet for the high festivals, the holy Sabbaths of heaven; that he is leaving the society of the world, because he is so soon to join "the innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and Church of the first born."

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1. What is said of Christ's example? 2. What message did John send to Jesus? 3. What was our Lord's answer? 4. What did He say concerning John? 5. Explain verse 1. 6. Unto what did Christ liken that generation? 7. What cities did He upbraid? 8. How? 9. What is meant by "hast hid these things from the wise and prudent?" &c. 10. What is the meaning of verse 2? 11. Who are invited to come to Jesus? 12. How are they to come? 13. What shall they receive by thus coming?

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## CHAPTER XII.

<sup>1</sup> Christ reproveth the blindness of the Pharisees concerning the breach of the sabbath, 3 by scriptures, 9 by reason, 13 and by a miracle. <sup>22</sup> He healeth the man possessed that was blind and dumb. <sup>31</sup> Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven. <sup>35</sup> Account shall be made of idle words. <sup>38</sup> He rebuketh the unfaithful, who seek after a sign. <sup>49</sup> and sheweth who is his brother, sister, and mother.

**A**T that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn, and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.  
<sup>a</sup>Deut. xxiii. 25; Mark ii. 23; Luke vi. 1.

*At that time.* A general expression, meaning about the time when the things just spoken of occurred. *Jesus went on the sabbath day*, literally, *sabbaths*. The plural and singular of this word were often used indiscriminately for the seventh day of the week. *Through the corn, i. e.*, the paths which led through corn fields. The fields were sown with corn, in the proper English sense of grain or bread-stuffs, with

particular reference to wheat and barley. *And his disciples*, who had eaten nothing during the day, in accordance with a customary way of appeasing hunger in Palestine at this day, pulled off the heads of grain, and ate them. (See Luke vi. 1.)

2. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

Some of the Pharisees, it seems, accompanied Christ on this occasion, prompted, probably, by curiosity, in expectation of seeing more miracles. It appears that He did not Himself eat of the barley. (John iv. 32-34.) The allegation of the Pharisees was false, for it was more than the law of the Sabbath (Ex. xvi. 20; Deut. xxiii. 25) said or implied—it forbade servile work on that day, but the act of the disciples was

no servile work. Hypocrites place all holiness in the observance of outward ceremonies, whilst they neglect moral duties. (Matt. xxiii. 24.)

3. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him. 4. How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?  
1 Sam. xxi. 6. Ex. xxv. 30; Lev. xxiv. 5. Ex. xxix. 32; Lev. viii. 31, xxiv. 9.

The Saviour defended His disciples against their accusers. We are thus reminded that though Satan is "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. xii. 10), yet we "have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," who is ever maintaining the cause of His people, in heaven. Our Lord in His answer referred to 1 Sam. xxi. *The house of God*—in which He dwelt among His people. At the time here mentioned, the tabernacle, which was a portable tent, was at Nob. (1 Sam. xxi. 1.) *The show-bread, or, 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.) 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 that bread was also eaten by *them which were with him* (see Luke vi. 4), why might not my disciples pluck barley on a holy day, when they were hungry?" Our Lord argued for the true construction of the law. We ought not to be *morbidly scrupulous* in observing the Sabbath. Many things may be allowable on it which timid minds consider unlawful. Anything, however, like a violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath by any unnecessary employments or recreations, even such as are proper on other days, is unwarranted.

5. Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?  
Num. xxviii. 9; John vii. 22.

Our Lord here further vindicates the conduct of His disciples by reference to the example of the priests in the temple, who, on the Sabbath, killed and dressed their sacrifices, and baked the shew-bread, which involved necessary bodily labor,

and which, on the reasoning of the Pharisees, would be accounted a profanation of that day. (See Num. xxviii. 9; Lev. xxiv. 5; 1 Chron. ix. 32.)

6. But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.—2 Chron. vi. 18; Mal. iii. 1.

In making this declaration, our Lord may have made some gesture, indicative of a reference to himself. "Here is one *greater than the temple* (John ii. 21), and, therefore, able to dispense with temple and ritual sanctities when they come in collision with the object of His mission, or the maintenance of His ministers in the performance of that mission." The Jews esteemed nothing greater than the temple except the God who was worshiped in it. Christ, therefore, by asserting that He was greater than the temple, asserts that He was *God*, and this He does in still more direct terms, verse 8, comp. Gen. ii. 3.

7. But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.  
Hos. vi. 6; Mt. vi. 6-8; chap. ix. 13.

Our Lord again refers to the passage quoted in chap. ix. 13 (on which see Notes.) "Had ye understood the great principle of all religion which the Scripture everywhere recognizes, that ceremonial observances must give way before moral duties, and particularly the necessities of nature, ye would have refrained from these captious complaints against men who, in this matter, are blameless."

8. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.—Luke vi. 5.

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, which was established at the end of the creative week, formed a part of the Patriarchal re-



ligion, and was woven into the *moral* code given to Moses, is, in its essence, perpetual, yet the right of modifying and controlling it belongs to Christ, and can be exercised only under His authority.

Accordingly, this right was exercised by Christ. After His resurrection the Jewish Sabbath, which was laid upon the primitive Sabbath, was abolished, and "the Lord's day," or Christian Sabbath, was superimposed upon another day—the *first day of the week*—thus making that day of universal and perpetual obligation. (See Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; Rev. i. 10.) The obligation and observance of this day are also recognized by Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, A. D. 101; Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, about A. D. 162; Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, who had been a disciple of Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles, A. D. 167; Clement, of Alexandria, A. D. 192; Tertullian, about the same time; Constantine, in the fourth century, and Chrysostom.

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. The infidel actors in the French Revolution abolished the Christian Sabbath and substituted what they called the decades, or every tenth day. 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 the world fell back into the olden ruts, seized the Sabbath again as too precious to let go. We live in days when anything like a 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. The fourth commandment has never been repealed by Christ, and 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."

9. <sup>b</sup>And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue.—<sup>b</sup>Luke vi. 6; Mark iii. 1.

When he was departed thence—but "on another Sabbath." (Luke vi. 6.) He went into their synagogue, i. e., the synagogue of the people among whom He had come.

10. <sup>¶</sup> And behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.—<sup>¶</sup>Luke xiii. 14, xiv. 3; John ix. 16.

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. When once thoroughly established, it was incurable by any art of man. *Is it lawful*, &c. This question was proposed by the scribes and Pharisees (Luke vi. 7), with the hope of finding matter of accusation.

11. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? 12. How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore is it lawful to do well on the sabbath days?

<sup>¶</sup>See Ex. xxiii. 4, 5; Deut. xxii. 4. <sup>¶</sup>Luke xii. 24. <sup>¶</sup>Mark iii. 4; Luke vi. 9.

Our Lord answers the question, as was His custom (see xxi. 24), by another question. "Are there not things much less important and earnest than that which I am about to do, which you would not leave undone? Which of you would not draw your sheep from the pit into which it had fallen on the Sabbath; and shall I, the true Shepherd, not rescue a sheep of my fold, a man, that is far better than a sheep? Your own consciences tell you that that were a true Sabbath work, and how much worthier this? You have asked me, Is it lawful to *heal* on the Sabbath? I answer, It is lawful to *do well* on that day, and therefore to *heal*." They can answer Him nothing further—"they held their peace." (Mark iii. 4.)

13. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like as the other.—<sup>¶</sup>Luke xiii. 13; Acts iii. 7, 8.

Jesus could have healed the poor man by a word, but He asked 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 unben-

lieving answer; he confided in the power of Jesus, and his attempt was successful—his hand *was restored whole, like as the other*. 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. Faith disregards apparent impossibilities where there is a command and promise of God. "God's commands," says an old writer, "are grants. When He enjoins us, Repent, or Believe, it is only to draw from us a free acknowledgment of our impotence to perform what He commanded us. This confession being made, what He enjoins He will enable us to do. Man's owning his weakness is the only stock for God to engraft thereon the grace of His assistance."

14. ¶ Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.  
\*Chap. xvii. 1; Mark iii. 6; Luke vi. 11; John v. 18, x. 39, xl. 13.

They felt that 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 *held a council* with a view to fix on a plan for destroying Jesus. 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.

15. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; 16. And recharged them that they should not make him known;  
\*Chap. x. 23; Mark iii. 7. \*Chap. ix. 2. \*Chap. ix. 30.

When Jesus knew the murderous designs of the Pharisees, as the time had not come when He was to be delivered up to them, He *withdrew himself from thence*—whither, our Evangelist does not say, but Mark (iii. 7) says, "it was to the sea," to some distance, no doubt, from the scene of the miracle, and the machinations of His foes. *And great multitudes, &c.* The common people were better disposed, and were favorably affected by His miracles and teachings. *And he healed them all*—as many as required healing. *And charged them, &c.* Here again silence was enjoined in regard to His being the Christ. It was not yet time for this to be widely known,

or loudly asserted with such exciting proofs, any more than it was time for Him to die. (See on chap. viii. 4, ix. 30.)

17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18. Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, upon whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. 19. He shall not strive, nor cry: neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

\*Isa. xlii. 1. \*Chap. iii. 17, xvii. 5. \*Luke xvii. 20; John xviii. 36, 37. \*2 Cor. x. 1. \*Ps. li. 17, cxviii. 3; Isa. lvi. 15; Ezek. xxxiv. 16; Luke iv. 13; Heb. xii. 12, 13.

*That it might be fulfilled, &c.* The quotation is from Isaiah xlii. 1-4, and though not in the exact words of the original, yet adheres closely to the sense. The Evangelist considers this quietude of our Lord as going to fulfill this prophecy, in which the Messiah is described as establishing His kingdom in the earth by the most silent and unostentatious means and influences. Here is another reason for Christ's frequently seeking retirement. *Behold my servant.* Jesus "took upon Him the form of a servant." (Phil. ii. 7.) It is only in respect of His incarnation and mediatorial work, that our Lord Jesus Christ is called the servant of Almighty God. *Have chosen.* The verb thus rendered, is equal to *set apart as chosen*. *Well pleased.* This acknowledgment of our High Priest was made by the Father at the baptism of Jesus (Matt. iii. 17), and at His transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5). *I will put my Spirit upon him.* This also was fulfilled at His baptism, (iii. 16; see also John iii. 34.) *Shall show judgment, &c.* Shall teach the law and will of God. *He shall not strive, &c.*—he shall not contend with martial violence, *nor cry*, in a clamorous and turbulent manner, *neither shall any man hear his voice* in the streets, but He shall (as the next verse indicates) manage His administration with great gentleness and sweetness, caution and tenderness.

*A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.* By a bruised reed may be meant a musical pipe made of reed, and formerly used by shepherds, which could never be very enchanting; but when bruised, would sound inharmoniously and harshly, and would probably be broken to pieces and thrown aside; or, a reed stalk, commonly found in marshy soils, which, in its best estate is slender

and frail, but when bruised is unable to bear any weight, is unavailing for any useful purpose, and seems fit for nothing but the fire. By "smoking flax" is meant the wick of the torch or candle, made of this material, when the flame is extinct, but the tow retaining some particles of fire, sends forth no useful light, but only offensive effluvium. By these figures are represented persons of very weak and defective attainments in the divine life, or afflicted with outward troubles and inward conflicts, or subject to moral infirmities. Such it is said the Saviour will not overlook or despise. He will not only not destroy or injure them, but He will sustain, strengthen and confirm the bruised reed, and rekindle the smoking flax and cause it to burn clear and bright. That this is implied, is obvious in the delightful addition in which we are told that the work, though opposed, shall be rendered triumphant, *till he send forth judgment unto victory. The Gentiles trust—Hope.* (Comp. Ps. cxlvi. 3; Jer. xvii. 5; Rom. xv. 12; Eph. i. 12.)

22. ¶ Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

\*See chap. ix. 32; Mark iii. 11; Luke xi. 14.

*One possessed with a devil.* The evil spirit had exerted his cruel power in depriving this man, who was brought to the Saviour, of sight and speech. In his deep affliction he could not appeal by words to Christ's compassion; he stood before Him with his sightless eyeballs in bondage to the devil. What a spectacle of misery to excite His heart! As Jesus glanced an eye of mercy on him, his lips spoke his release, and in an instant Satan was forced to surrender his captive and flee away. The man was now restored, his tongue was unloosed, and his eyes were opened to behold the world again. How great an event is recorded in the sacred narrative in three or four lines!

23. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

These fresh displays of love and power surprised and melted the hearts of the people, and they were on the point of publicly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. This culmination of enthusiasm awakened the strong reaction of the Pharisees, and led to the sudden and malignant accusation mentioned in the next verse.

24. \*But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

\*Chap. ix. 34; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15.

*They said,* most probably among themselves. *This fellow, &c.,* an expression of contempt, and an affirmation that Jesus did not cast out a demon in which He was not aided thereto by the prince of devils. (See on chap. ix. 34, x. 25.) Unable to deny the fact of the miraculous healing, the ever-watchful enemies of Jesus attempted to discredit Him by charging Him who wrought it, with collusion with Beelzebub. (See x. 25.) Had the Jews been universally or generally converted by Christ's miracles, the skeptic in our day might argue with some plausibility, that the facts had been invented to gratify the national propensity, and had been credited without examination or proof. But, as the case stands, we are now certain that these miracles were wrought in the presence of enemies, and thus subjected to the severest scrutiny, and that they carried with them conviction to multitudes, notwithstanding the fiercest opposition which national prejudice, bigotry and vice could excite, and the strictest search which could be made by the most vigilant hostility.

25. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

\*Chap. ix. 4; Luke vi. 8, ix. 47; John ii. 25; Acts i. 24; Rev. ii. 23.

*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. *Said unto them,* without any anger, notwithstanding the very awful and flagrantly wicked charge preferred against Him. 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. In refuting the slander that He is confederated with the prince of darkness, Christ's first illustration is taken from a *kingdom*, a state, a body politic, implying not a mere aggregation of men, but organic life and unity of principle and interest. *Every kingdom divided against itself*—in which there is nothing but divided counsel 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, *every city*, with antagonistic elements, and *every house*, composed of hostile and discordant members, shall not stand.

26. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand? <sup>John xii. 31, xiv. 30; 2 Cor. iv. 4.</sup>

Had the idea of *division*, in the various illustrations given, been the simple one of some opposing others, our Lord would no doubt have applied His argument or principle to Satan's *kingdom* rather than *himself*, but as the Pharisees accused Him of casting out Satan by Satan's own power, and as He here presented the paradoxical idea of Satan as an individual arrayed against himself, we may safely infer that this very paradox was meant to be the point of His whole argument. “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 cast out error and sin. When Christians keep up needless divisions in the Church, such, for example, as divisions about matters not essential to salvation, about forms and ceremonies, and ecclesiastical arrangements upon which Scripture is silent, they show themselves more foolish than Satan himself.

27. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.—Mark ix. 33, 39.

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 children*—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. *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.

28. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. <sup>Dan. ii. 44; vii. 14; Luke i. 33; xi. 20; xvii. 20, 21.</sup>

The argument here appears to be this: “If these miracles which I work are really wrought by the finger of God (see Ex. viii. 19), and I am clearly proved by them One sent from God, then, whether you will allow it or not, the times of the 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.

29. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. <sup>Isa. xlix. 24; Luke xi. 21-23.</sup>

Our Lord here points out the folly of supposing that He acts by a power from, and consequently *under*, Satan, since He evinces *superiority* over Satan by overpowering him, and despoiling him of his authority. When a strong man is robbed, no one imagines that he has robbed himself, but every one regards it as the work of an enemy, superior in power; so, when Satan's instruments and agents are driven out by Jesus, it ought to have been argued that the Prince of this world had been cast out and judged (John xii. 31; xvi. 11) by coming in contact with his conqueror. (See on Luke xi. 21.)

30. He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

The idea is, I am not with Satan, Satan is clearly not with me; we are therefore antagonists: there is hostility between us; it is the woman's seed bruising the serpent's head. *Gathereth . . . scattereth*. These words allude to a *gathering* in harvest. Co-

laborers gather in concert, the ravager of their fields scattereth the produce. Here note, 1. That Christ is engaged in an important contest, and calls upon us to take part with Him. The cause which He has undertaken is the cause of truth, of righteousness, and of God, against the interests of falsehood, of sin, and of Satan. 2. That for any one to be with Christ in this contest, is to embrace the Gospel, obey its precepts, openly profess his adherence to the Saviour, take up his cross, deny himself and follow Him, for only by being with Jesus, can any amount of victory over Satan be obtained or hoped for, and who-soever contributes not to His spiritual harvest, scatters to the wind. 3. That there can be no neutrality in this matter. All those who are undecided and half-hearted, who appear to be between Christ and the world, who inhabit the confines of religion and irreligion, are, how much soever they may wish to be accounted otherwise, *against* the Son of God.

31. <sup>c</sup> Wherefore I say unto you, <sup>d</sup> All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: <sup>e</sup> but the blasphemy *against* the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. 32. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, <sup>f</sup> it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, <sup>g</sup> it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

<sup>d</sup> Mark iii. 28; Luke xii. 10; Heb. vi. 4, &c., x. 26, 29; 1 John v. 16. <sup>e</sup> Acts vii. 51. <sup>f</sup> Chap. xi. 19, xiii. 55; John vii. 12, 52. <sup>g</sup> 1 Tim. i. 13. <sup>h</sup> Mark iii. 29.

Wherefore, *i. e.*, in view of the impious words of the Pharisees, the sin of which is shown in the verse immediately preceding, and which was at least a close approximation to the unpardonable sin about to be referred to. *All manner of sin*—all sorts of sin. *Blasphemy* is mentioned by name, and by itself, as being peculiarly atrocious. This word, in the original, is of the same signification as the word *calumny* in ordinary use. Though it has special reference to God, yet it also refers to the reproach or slander of men—the defamation of what is good, noble and holy, on its appearance in the world, with malicious intent. It is an aggravated form of sin—both a species and aggravation of general sin. *Shall be forgiven*, may, or can, upon repentance, through the atonement, be forgiven. In Mark iii. 28, the language is still stronger: “All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme.”

Up to this point blasphemy forms the climax of sin, but of sin which may still be forgiven, because, in his fanatical enthusiasm for what he deems noble, good and holy, a man may overlook and misunderstand even a higher manifestation of it. How comforting the thought that though *all sin* will be followed with *sorrow*, yet there is only *one sin* that cannot be pardoned. How glorious the atonement by which blasphemy may be forgiven! (See Ezek. xxxiii. 11, xviii. 23, 31; Acts xiii. 38.) *But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.* This is explained in the latter clause of verse 32.

*And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him.* The distinction made in this verse seems entirely unaccountable if made between the second and third Persons of the Godhead (who are of equal sanctity), simply as such and without anything to qualify or specify the statement. This difficulty disappears, however, in observing that the person mentioned in the first clause is not the Eternal Word, or Son of God, but *the Son of man*, a phrase which describes the Saviour in His humiliation, in the form of a servant, as He was while resident on earth. A contrast is here drawn between slandering “the Son of man” while His Godhead was thus veiled, and, as it were, in abeyance, and slandering the same blessed Person after the blaze of glory which *the Holy Ghost* was soon to throw around His claims, and in the full knowledge of all that. This great *first-mentioned* sin 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 (see Luke xxiii. 34; Acts iii. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 8; 1 Tim. i. 13), and many of whom, so sinning, were pardoned we cannot doubt, as, for example, on the day of Pentecost, after Peter’s preaching.

*But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, &c.* It will be noticed that in verse 32, it is, “whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man,” &c., but here, “whosoever speaketh” (without the addition) “a word,” thus drawing a distinction between the person from whom, by reason of preju-

dice or ignorance, a word of blasphemy might escape against Christ, whom in His form as a servant he may possibly mistake, and the person who speaks decidedly against the Holy Spirit. In each case, however, it should be remembered that the sin may be committed in *thought* or in *act* as well as in *speech*. The meaning of these words is by very high authority understood to be, that when Christ should rise from the dead (Rom. i. 4) and ascend into heaven, and, being exalted at the right hand of the Father, send forth the Holy Spirit on His apostles and disciples, enabling them to perform various wonderful works in His name, in proof of their testimony concerning His resurrection and ascension, whosoever shall blaspheme this last and most complete attestation to Jesus as the promised Messiah, and, from determined enmity to Him and His kingdom, ascribe the operations of the Holy Spirit to Satan, *it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come, i. e., neither during his present life, nor in his endless existence beyond the grave, the expression being a strong negative, an emphatic never.* (Mark iii. 29.) It does not by any means follow from the words, "neither in the world to come," that any sin not forgiven here will hereafter be forgiven. This was a form of speech common among the Jews when they asserted strongly that any thing should never be done. Absolution is publicly pronounced on believers at the judgment, but their sins were forgiven in this life. The tremendous sin here denounced was committed by those who, after the day of Pentecost, persisting in unbelief and obstinate impenitence, and resisting the ministration of the Holy Ghost, were given over to a reprobate mind. 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 Thes. ii. 15, 16.) The sin, therefore, to which our Lord here refers, seems to be the sin 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. (See Heb. vi. 4. &c.; x. 26, 27; also 1 John v. 16, from which it appears that there is but one un-

pardonable sin, and all these are *it*.) It is the sin of deliberately neglecting God's truth, while the truth is clearly known with the head, and deliberately choosing sin and the world—the sin committed by those who (as in the case of the Hebrews just referred to) are the subjects of deep convictions and powerful impressions. It is a combination of light in the understanding, and determined wickedness in the will, not one particular *act* of sin, but a malignant state of heart against God and His cause, which at length reaches a fearful consummation. (2 Tim. iii. 8; Jude iv. 12, 13.) Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab, Judas Iscariot, Julian and Francis Spira are prominent and fearful illustrations of our Lord's meaning.

The question, why this sin shall never be forgiven, is sufficiently answered by the reply, because God has willed it so. It is a limitation dictated by sovereign wisdom and righteousness. No sin can be forgiven without repentance and through the sacrifice of Christ; but repentance is the gift of God, and as the blasphemer against the Holy Ghost drives from him the only Being who could give repentance (Acts v. 31), and treats the blood of the covenant wherewith He (Christ) was sanctified as an unholy thing, he seals himself up, under final and total apostasy, until the day of doom. (Heb. vi. 7, 8; 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. This grief is itself a proof that they have not committed that sin because it is a mark of that sin to be accompanied with a hard and impenitent heart.

33. Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by his fruit.—Chap. vii. 17; Luke vi. 43, 44.

The meaning is, consider or hold the tree to be good if the fruit be good. These words have a double reference: to Jesus, who could not be evil, for His works were good, to the Pharisees, who could not be good, because their works were evil. (See on chap. vii. 17.) *For the tree is known by his fruit.* A man may be known by his actions, as a tree may be known by its fruit, yet not by a single action, but by a series of actions, not by a particular act,

but by our general course. The habitual conduct of a pious man *must* be good; the habitual conduct of an unconverted man *must* be evil. There cannot be a permanent contrariety between a moral agent's moral actions and his moral dispositions.

34. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. iii. 7, xxiii. 33. <sup>2</sup>Luke vi. 45.

Jesus, by thus calling the Pharisees a *generation*, or brood of *vipers*, as John had called them (Luke iii. 7), points out the diabolical nature of their hypocrisy. He declared them to be the seed of the old serpent, and the children of Satan. They had accused Him of casting out devils through the power of Satan, while they themselves belonged to the family of the wicked one. *How can ye, &c.* A strong expression of what is deemed impossible. Man is dependent on God's grace for that change which alone can enable him to do right. *For out of, &c.* "That of which the heart is full," says *Leighton*, "runs out by the tongue; if the heart be full of God, the tongue will delight to speak of Him, and if nothing but earth is there, all that man's discourse will have an earthly smell." (See Ps. xxxvii. 30, 31, xl. 8, 9; Prov. x. 20.) 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*. A man's conversation is one indication of the state of his heart.

35. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.

<sup>1</sup>Ps. xxxvii. 30, 31; Prov. x. 20, 21; Eph. iv. 29; Col. iii. 16.

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.

36. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

<sup>1</sup>Ecd. xii. 14; Rom. ii. 16; Eph. v. 4, 6. <sup>2</sup>Prov. xiii. 3; James ii. 21, 25.

*Every idle word*. Not only for the "evil things," that is, the blasphemous words which they utter, will men be called to account, but even for their *inconsiderate* and *unreal* words. *Idle*, literally, *objectless, effectless, useless*, seems to mean something *more* than unprofitable, and *less* than mischievous. Such words will have to be reckoned for *because* they are vain and fruitless. At the last day our words, as an outward expression of our hearts, will be produced as *evidence* of our state before God, and it is only good words that will then justify us, or show that we were born again and washed in Christ's blood. If for idle words we are to be accountable, how much more for bitter, malicious words, especially those uttered against God's people, whom He esteems His precious ones, His treasure! Let us resolve, by God's grace, to be more careful over our tongues, and more particular about our use of them. (Ps. xxxix. 1; cxli. 3; James iii. 2.)

38. ¶ Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xvi. 1; Mark viii. 11; Luke xi. 16, 29; John ii. 18; 1 Cor. i. 22.

It was not with a *sincere* desire to be assured of the truth of Christ's Messiahship that the scribes and Pharisees wished for a *sign*. Perhaps they wished some splendid show in the sky. They had already witnessed enough of miracles to convince them of this, if they had been open to conviction. (John xv. 24.) 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 Himself. He who is not content with this wants faith, not proofs.

39. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly: so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

<sup>1</sup>Isa. lvii. 3; chap. xvi. 4; Mark viii. 33; John iv. 48. <sup>2</sup>Jonah i. 17.

Christ, knowing that they were *determined* not to believe in Him, refused their arrogant demand, but gave them *the sign of the prophet Jonas*. The word *adulterous* is here used in a spiritual sense; in the Old Testament it refers to *idolatry*, but as the Jews, in Christ's time, were not guilty of idol-worship, it refers here to practical infidelity, impiety, apostasy from spiritual

religion. Hence, they were not only an *evil*, but *adulterous* generation. For as *Jonah*, &c. As though our Lord had said, "you ask a sign from heaven, but the only sign I shall vouchsafe you, is a sign from earth. As *Jonah*, though there was but little belief that he would return from the fish, yet was restored alive unto the dry land again, so shall the Messiah, though there be as little belief of it, after three days, be taken out of the jaws of death and restored unto the land of the living." In the history of *Jonah* (*Jonah* i. 17) we read only of "a great fish." Here we are told it was a *whale*, the only creature besides man whose creation is specially recorded (*Gen.* 1. 21), although the original word denotes any large fish. *Dr. Thomson* insists that we should believe the fish to have been a whale, regarding the absence of whales in the Mediterranean at the present day as creating no difficulty, since "the multiplication of ships in this sea, after the time of *Jonah*, frightened them out of it, as other causes have driven all lions out of Palestine, where they were once numerous. . . . Our Lord calls it a whale, and I am contented with His translation; and whale it was, not a shark."

As to our Lord being *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth* it is to be noted that, as is usual in all languages, the Jews in particular denoted a part of a day by the name of the *whole*. The very same quantity of time thus described, and which, in reality, was only *one whole day*, a part of *two others*, and *two whole nights*, is termed *three days and three nights* in the book of *Esther*: "Go, neither eat nor drink *three days, night or day*, &c. (*iv.* 16.) Afterward it follows (*chap.* v. 1): "On the *third day*, *Esther* stood," &c. (See, also, *2 Chron.* x. 5; comp. with verse 12.)

So, as a child was to be circumcised when *eight days* old, both the day of his birth and circumcision were two of these *eight days*. Again, as among us, the time of twenty-four hours is called a *day*, so among the Jews it is sometimes called a *day*, and sometimes a *night and a day*, as in *Gen.* chap. i.: "The evening and the morning," or the *night and the day* were the *day*. The reasons of our Lord's remaining in the grave just the time that He did, may be

thus stated: 1. To fulfil the *ancient prophecies* and *his own prophecies*. (See *1 Cor.* xv. 4; *Matt.* xii. 40; *Lev.* xxiii. 10, &c.; *Ps.* xvi. 10; *Matt.* xvi. 21, xvii. 22, 23, xx., xviii. 19.) 2. That, on the one hand, He might be dead long enough for no doubt to remain of the reality of His death; and, on the other hand, He might revive soon enough for His body, which had never known sin, never to know corruption. (See again *Ps.* xvi. 10, also, *John* xi. 39.) For the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, which was a *consequence* of Christ's rising on the third day, see on chapter xii. 8.

41. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of *Jonas*, and behold, a greater than *Jonas* is here."  
\*Luke xi. 32. \*Jer. iii. 11; Ezek. xvi. 51, 52; Rom. ii. 27. †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.) *Jonah*, son of *Amittai*, the fifth of the minor prophets, is generally considered as the most ancient of the prophets, and is supposed to have lived B. C. 840. It is here affirmed that the people of *Nineveh*, who had among them for a short time a prophet—a person unknown—of a different nation and religion, and working no miracles, and yet repented under his preaching, and this too only to avoid temporal evils, would stand at the bar of God, to put to shame, by their example, the Jews of Christ's day, because they repented not to obtain everlasting salvation, though having among them the mightiest and most faithful preacher that ever warned a people. The sins of unbelief and impenitence are greatly aggravated from the means afforded by God to bring men to faith and obedience.

42. "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of *Solomon*, and behold, a greater than *Solomon* is here."

\*1 Kings x. 1; 2 Chron. ix. 1; Luke x. 31.

The allusion here is to the queen of *Sheba*. 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 *Sabeans*. (*Job* i. 15.) *The utter-*



most parts of the earth, &c.—a hyperbole, found also in the best Greek writers, for a great distance. 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 behold, a greater, &c.* 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, 12-14, 16-28; 2 Chron. ix. 29.) Here, and in the end of the preceding 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 Jonah or Solomon. 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. (See on preceding verse.)

43. \*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.—Luke xi. 24. \*Job i. 7; 1 Peter v. 8.

Had there been no reality in demoniacal possessions, would our Lord thus have appealed to a case of this kind? *Is gone out.* The language suggests to us a strong contrast between this case and those in which our Lord openly interposed and “cast forth” the devils by His word. Sometimes an evil spirit *forsakes* his habitation. The devil having left his *house* is here represented in allusion to the common notion that evil demons had their haunts in lonely and desolate places (see Isa. xiii. 21; Rev. xviii. 2), to have traveled through *dry* or desert places, but to have found no *rest*, no satisfaction and repose. (Isa. lvii. 21; comp. xlvi. 22; Job i. 7 and ii. 2.) Our enemy, we know, walks about seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter v. 8.)

44. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished.

Perhaps this devil had left the man, hoping to make new conquests, and to in-

crease the number of his victims, but when disappointed, he thinks of returning to his old abode. He claims the heart as his own property—“*my house.*” 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. Better still for him, 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 is gain to the evil re-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 farther from God, and making use of it for the enlargement and increase of the dominion and the power of darkness.

45. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself 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. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. \*I Job. vi. 4, x. 26; 2 Peter ii. 20-22.

The unclean spirit will not re-enter weak and alone, but selects associates to share his spoil. *Seven* is often used in Scripture in an indefinite sense for “many” or “several.” It also often implied with the Jews something *perfect, completed, filled up*, which is the proper import of the Hebrew word. *More wicked.* 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! Even as a house forsaken by man becomes the habitation of beasts and birds, so does the heart, when Jesus is absent, become the habitation of evil spirits. Many, alas! who make a profession of religion, and seem to make some progress in reformation, when they turn away from the truth and relapse into old evil habits, become worse than

ever before. *Even so, &c.* From the case of the demoniac this impressive warning is suggested. The Jewish nation, by the preaching of John and of Jesus, had a great deliverance offered to them. Fearful in proportion would be their condition in rejecting this deliverance. The end of the matter was, as we learn from Josephus, that they relapsed into a state of crime, confusion and misery, to which the Gentile world has no parallel.

46. ¶ While he yet talked to the people, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

¶ Mark iii. 31; Luke viii. 19-21. ¶ Chap. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3; John ii. 12, vii. 3, 5; Acts i. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 5; Gal. i. 19.

The earnestness and assiduity of Christ in teaching the people, notwithstanding the opposition of the Pharisees, gave disquietude to His friends. (See Mark iii. 20, 21.) 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. *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.

47. Then one said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with 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 made by the person whom doubtless His relations had sent for this purpose.

48. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

We must not suppose from this answer that Jesus 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.)

49. And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 50. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

¶ John xv. 14; Gal. v. 6, vi. 15; Col. iii. 11; Heb. ii. 11.

Christ here re-affirms 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. *Stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, He said, Behold, &c.* As He 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.

What is included in doing the will of God? *It is to believe.* This is expressly stated as being the Father's will. It is more than a common faith: the devils believe and tremble; but many who profess Christianity have never trembled before God. This faith is connected with experience; it is of the operation of God, and works by love. *It is to obey.* Obedience is the practical evidence of faith. Faith may be compared to a tree planted in the garden of the soul, rooted and grounded in Christ, covered with the green leaves of a lively profession, watered with heavenly showers, and yielding the fruits of obedience, and the graces of the Spirit. Our obedience must be right in its principle, sincere in its motive, evangelical in its spirit, cheerful in its manner, and universal in its application. "Whosoever." There is no restriction but that which we put on ourselves. We cannot go beyond the Gospel commission, for it extends to sinners whose iniquities have reached unto heaven, are as black as hell, and numerous as the sands on the sea-shore.

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! 2. All true Christians are obedient to God. (Ps. cxix. 5; Rom. vii. 22-5.) But though they do not keep the Divine commandments perfectly, as Jesus did (John vi. 38), they are comforted by knowing that He loves them. 3. How absurd, from this passage, is the idea that Mary is our intercessor with Christ or God.

1. What did the disciples in passing through the corn field? 2. How did Christ vindicate their conduct? 3. Who is Lord of the Sabbath? 4. Why? 5. When was "the Lord's day" substituted for the Jewish Sabbath? 6. How did Christ answer the objection to His healing on the Sabbath? 7. How was the cure effected? 8. What was the effect upon the Pharisees? 9. What is meant by a "bruised reed" and "smoking flax?" 10. What other miracle was now wrought? 11. What charge was brought against Jesus? 12. How did He answer it? 13. What is said of "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost?" 14. What is said of "a good man?" 15. What of idle words? 16. Explain "the sign of the prophet Jonas." 17. What is affirmed of "the men of Nineveh?" 18. What is said of "the unclean spirit?"

### CHAPTER XIII.

3 *The parable of the sower and the seed: 18 the exposition of it. 24. The parable of the tares, 31 of the mustard seed, 33 of the leaven, 44 of the hidden treasure, 45 of the pearl, 47 of the dragnet cast into the sea: 53 and how Christ is contemned of his own countrymen.*

**T**HE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side. 2. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.—Mark iv. 1. Luke viii. 4. Luke v. 3.

*Same day*—the day of the transaction of the last chapter. *Out of the house* in which He had healed the demoniac and denounced the Pharisee. (Mark iii. 19.) *Sea-side*, the shore of the sea of Galilee. *Into a ship*, or, rather, *the vessel*, or *boat*, the article indicating a particular vessel usually kept there. It probably belonged to some of the "fishermen" (see chap. iv. 22), and seems to have been kept on the lake for the use of Christ and His Apostles. Our Lord went into the boat, that He might be less incommoded, and better heard by the people.

3. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow: Luke viii. 5.

A *parable* (the word being derived from a Greek work signifying to *compare together*), is a *similitude*, in which one thing is compared to another, especially spiritual things to natural, by which means those spiritual things are better understood, and make a deeper impression on an honest and attentive mind. There are seven parables recorded in this chapter. *Behold*. Our Lord addressed both the ear and the eye. Probably He saw at no great distance from Him a husbandman who was scattering seed in the furrowed field. This parable is recorded also by Luke (viii. 4, &c.) and Mark (iv. 3, &c.), on which see notes. *A sower went forth to sow*. Our Lord Himself is to be regarded as the Chief Sower. 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 out the work which He anticipated and began.

4. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

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 in the earth, but lay exposed on the surface, 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 as he scatters the seed corn. It is not said that the sower sowed the seed by the way-side, on the rock, among the thorns, and into good ground, but that it "*fell*" there. The sower sowed well. It was the *soil* which was evil.

5. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

*Stony places*. Not places in the field abounding in small stones, for then would seeds germinate in the crevices between; but to places, underneath which were large flat rocks, covered with a thin surface of earth, which prevented the seed from having any depth of root. *Forthwith, &c.* While the rock below hindered it from striking deeply downward, it put forth its energies the more abundantly in the stalk. It 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.

7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them:

This portion of seed wants neither root nor depth of earth. It grows up, but the misfortune is, that the *thorns* grow up with it. Under this term may be included all

rank weeds, varying with countries and climates, which infest the soil and hurt the harvest; the roots drinking up the sap of the ground, while the branches veil off the sunlight.

8. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.—Gen. xxvi. 12.

This portion of seed fell into soil free from rocks and thorn-bushes, and was productive. The terms *hundred fold*, *sixty fold*, *thirty fold*, are used as round numbers to express the varieties of increase from a moderate to an abundant harvest, there being so much yielded for each grain that was sown. The return of a hundred fold for one is not unknown in the East.

9. ¶ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.  
¶ Chap. xi. 15; Mark iv. 9.

This expression is recorded by all the three Evangelists, and seems to point out the special importance of the parable. (See on chap. xi. 15.)

10. ¶ And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

This question indicates that this was a *new form* of our Lord's teaching.

11. He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

¶ Chap. xi. 25, xvi. 17; Mark iv. 11; 1 Cor. ii. 10; 1 John ii. 27.

*It is given unto you.* As a reward of your diligence and desire to be informed (Luke viii. 9), these things shall be explained to you. *Mysteries, &c.*—things respecting the Messiah's kingdom; things which cannot be known until they are revealed. *To them it is not given*, they shall be left in darkness, and shall have their voluntary ignorance punished with judicial blindness.

12. ¶ For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.  
¶ Chap. xxv. 29; Mark iv. 25; Luke viii. 15, and xix. 26.

The gifts we have, will either be continued to us and increased, 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. There is no surer way to thrive in grace, and increase in gifts, than to exercise and improve them. *Even that he hath*, in Luke, (viii. 18), "seemeth to have." Men only seem to have what they do not use, and mere shows of religion will be lost and forfeited.

13. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they see, and see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. 14. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, *By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive*: 15. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their ears* are dull of hearing, and their eyes *they have closed*; lest at any time they should see with *their eyes*, and hear with *their ears*, and should understand with *their hearts*, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

¶ Is. vi. 9; Ez. xii. 2; Mark iv. 12; Luke viii. 10; John xii. 40; Acts xxviii. 27; Rom. xi. 8; 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

*Therefore, &c.* Parables not unfolded and understood, are a veil (as here) to the multitude, and in that view they are a great judgment. Our Lord did not begin to speak in parables until His miracles were malignantly ascribed to Satan. (Luke v. 30.) *Because, &c., i. e.*, "whilst they see with the eyes of their bodies the miracles I perform, they see the facts done, which they cannot gainsay, but they will not take in the clear evidence, full proof, and certain demonstration given thereby of my Messiahship, and whilst hearing the sermons preached by me, whether with or without parables, they hear my voice, the sound of it, but will not understand my voice internally, spiritually and experimentally." *Is fulfilled, &c.*, rather, is fulfilling, or is receiving its fulfillment. (Is. vi. 9, 10.) It was a generic description of character fulfilled equally truly by the Jews of the days of Isaiah, and the Jews of the days of Jesus. *Shall not understand.* The word *will* instead of *shall*, would more exactly express the thought.

*Heart is waxed gross.* Here is the reason why those withholdings of truth are inflicted—the minds of the people had grown too gross to receive it. *Their ears, &c.*, literally, they hear heavily with their ears. *Their eyes, &c.*—they have done it themselves, preferring darkness to light. *Lest at any time, &c.*, which shows that being turned from their evil ways, and being delivered from their miserable state, was possible for them. The original expression rendered *lest*, is frequently used to indicate, not the *design* for which a thing is done or permitted, but a *result*, or consequence of that thing. It is a law of God's spiritual kingdom, that resistance to truth hardens the heart, and this resistance by men may be so continuous and intense, that the truth, not only does not benefit them, but damages and condemns them.

16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. 17. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men 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.  
13 Chap. xvi. 17; Luke x. 23, 24; John xx. 29. 14 Heb. xi. 13; 1 Peter i. 10, 11.

Christ now pronounces His disciples happy, in that they were permitted to see not only the outside shell of truth, but the inner kernel, to understand the great truths of the Gospel, which He was then unfolding to them. *Prophets and righteous men*, as Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, David, Solomon, Hiezekiah, Jehoshaphat, 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 hear and see the things which the disciples were seeing and hearing, but were denied the privilege. The men of old saw them only by faith in types, but the disciples saw them with their bodily eyes, as living and present realities. Enormous advantages are enjoyed by believers who have lived since Christ came into the world, compared with 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. Let us never forget that in proportion to our advantages will be our responsibility.

18. ¶ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.  
19 Mark iv. 14; Luke vii. 11.

Not merely *understand*, but *hear*, with the spiritual perception accorded to you. Our Lord in this case became His own interpreter.

19. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.  
20 Chap. iv. 23.

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. They *hear the Word* of God in general, but pre-eminently His Gospel, the message of salvation through Christ, but do not *understand* it, do not perceive its

meaning, feel its force, or believe it. As an effect of the refusal of the hard heart to let the seed penetrate into it, Satan comes and "catcheth away that which was sown in their hearts." (See Eph. ii. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.)

20. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. 21. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by she is offended.  
22 Isa. lviii. 2; Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32; John v. 35. 23 Chap. xi. 6; 2 Tim. i. 15.

These, too, *hear the word*, and receive it with delight. It is not, however, a joy springing from the greatness of the benefit, even after all the counterbalancing costs and hazards are taken into account, but a joy arising from overlooking and leaving out of calculation those costs and hazards. Their 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. *Not root in himself*, such as Peter had (John vi. 68), and the Hebrew Christians (Heb. x. 34), and Paul (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

*But dureth for a while*, &c. In this case Satan cannot merely come, and, as in the last, take the word out of the heart without further trouble; the word has found some place there, and it needs that he bring some trying, if not directly hostile, influence to bear upon it. Nor need this influence be as cruel as the persecution the saints of old endured. (Heb. xi. 37.) For experience shows that a sneer from some leading spirit in a literary society, or a laugh raised by a gay circle of pleasure-seekers in a fashionable drawing-room, or the rude jest of scoffing artisans in a workshop, may do as much as the faggot and the stake to make a fair but false disciple deny his Lord. *Offended*, ensnared and led into evil.

22. ¶ He also that receiveth seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.  
23 Chap. xix. 23; Mark x. 23; Luke xviii. 24; 1 Tim. vi. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 10. 24 Jer. iv. 3.

As principal antagonists to the efficacious working of the Divine word, Christ mentions *the care of this world*—care for our

present livelihood, the pressure of an earthly existence—the *deceitfulness of riches*, the pleasures 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. (See Gal. v. 6, 19–24; Eph. ii. 3; 2 Peter ii. 18; 1 John ii. 16.) 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 a Christian's heart.

23. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it: which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

The fourth class of hearers *hear the word* willingly and with attention, and *understand* it, receive it in faith, obey it, and thus experience its power. The expression *good ground*, does 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 this expression is, "an unprejudiced heart, willing to be taught," such as was peculiarly lacking among the Jews in our Lord's time, and such as the Bereans had. (Acts xvii. 9.) *Beareth fruit*. (Gal. v. 22; 1 Cor. xiii. 4–7.) If there be no fruit, there can be no Christianity. Fruit is the test of the tree, character the symbol of principle. *Some an hundred-fold*, &c. That some portions of the good ground produced a larger return than others, corresponds with what we see. There are 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. Jesus does not teach that either of the first three is fated to remain what he is. The first may become what the fourth is, as the fourth may have once been what the first is. "It has been noticed, also," says *Alford*, "that the first is

more the fault of careless, inattentive *childhood*, the second of ardent, shallow *youth*, the third of worldly, self-seeking *age*."

Observe, 1. This parable 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. 3. As all assemblages of hearers may be resolved into four divisions, we have here decisive proof of our Lord's prescience. 4. It is a solemn thought that only in one out of the four classes of hearers, the seed brought forth fruit. 5. The minister's vocation is one involving much labor. 6. The Gospel is always fruitful seed in regard to its divine virtue, but not in regard to its actual effects. 7. The minister receives from Christ the seed which he sows, but it must also have become, through spiritual experience, his own possession. (Ps. cxvi. 10; 1 John i. 1–3.)

24. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

As the main design of the parable of the sower is to exhibit the kingdom in its relation to unbelieving men, most of whom, in various forms and with various measures of aggravation, ultimately reject it, the main design of *this* parable is, to exhibit the kingdom in its relation to the wicked one, who endeavors by cunning stratagem to destroy it. *A man which sowed*, &c.—a husbandman who took great pains to have a field sown with wheat of a superior quality.

25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

*Slept*. Where there is supineness, and not due care and culture, errors and vices spring up in the mind, like weeds in a field neglected. We seldom see the origin of spiritual errors and corruptions till they have taken root and begun to cover the land. *Enemy came*, &c. Here is an allusion to the custom in Oriental countries, of some secret enemy trying to ruin the crop of him whom he hates, by intermingling with it noxious weeds. The question which has been asked in all ages and countries, How came moral evil into the world? still remains unanswered. We cannot, with our feeble intellect, fathom the counsels

of the Most High. It is enough for us to know, as we are told in the beginning of the Bible, that he who brought sin or moral evil into the world was the devil, so our Lord here confirms this by declaring that an "enemy" hath done this, the same inveterate, implacable enemy of the human race, who was the original author of all our calamities, and who at this moment is the prime mover and great master-spring of all the wickedness and all the misery that now overwhelm the world.

*Tares*—*Lolium temulentum*, or darnel, a kind of false wheat, in all respects so like the genuine wheat that even an experienced eye cannot distinguish the two plants till they are in ear: the distinction then is manifest, and every one may observe it. *Went his way*. How emphatic these words! He knew that he had only to sow the seed and let it alone. So Satan knows that the doctrine which he sows in the human heart will take deep and rapid root, and need but little culture. Besides, in this kind of work it is for his interest to be as little *seen* as possible!

26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

To guard against the annoyance above referred to, and many other injuries, the occupiers of land in the East keep a number of servants as scouts, who are distributed over the property, and whose business it is to be on the look out—the hope of the harvest chiefly depending on their fidelity and vigilance. The simultaneous report of these *servants*, testifying what each had observed in his own district, was a sad confirmation that the existence of the noxious weeds was not a slight or partial evil.

28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29. But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.—Chap. iii. 12.

*An enemy, &c.* (See on verse 25.) *Wilt thou then, &c.* The interest which these servants took in their master's property, is worthy of imitation by all from whom service to their superiors is due. *Nay, &c.* The tares were injurious to the wheat, but

not so much so, as the loosening of the roots occasioned by pulling up the tares. Here were two evils, one of which was to be endured for a season, lest the other and greater should take place. *Gather ye first the tares.* In the East, the immemorial custom in reaping has been, either to lop off the ears singly by the stalk, or to pluck up the grain by the root, and as, by either of these means, the ears are successively grasped by the hand of the reaper, it is easy to perceive how the tares would be separated. *Gather the wheat, &c.* Here comes out the love of Christ for His people, or rather the value He sets on them. *My barn.* It is a prepared place. Heaven is prepared for Christians, while, amid the storms and vicissitudes of life, they are preparing for it. O what a day will that be when *all* Christ's redeemed ones are gathered to Himself!

31. ¶ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, ¶ The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. 32. Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

¶ Isa. ii. 2, 3; Mi. iv. 1; Mark iv. 30; Luke xliii. 18, 19.

To animate His disciples, lest they should be discouraged at the small beginning of the Gospel, our Lord proceeds to foretell its great and glorious success. (See Ezek. xxvii. 22–24; Ps. lxxx. 8.) *Mustard seed.* The mustard-tree is known to the modern nations of Palestine by the name of "Khardal," or "Chardal." *Least of all seeds, &c.* Though the mustard-seed is one of the smallest of all seeds that are known to grow into a ligneous substance, it often produces, in Judea, a tree of considerable size; hence the aptness of this tree for the purpose of our Lord, inasmuch as the point presented by Him is not greatness in itself, but the greatness of the tree compared with the smallness of the seed from which it springs.

How small and insignificant, to outward sense, was the kingdom of heaven at its commencement!—a weak babe sleeping in the manger, the dying sufferer on the cross, fishermen and publicans his followers, and, besides the twelve, the whole multitude of disciples amounting to but one hundred and twenty. (Acts i. 15.) But a year after, the adherents of Christianity became more numerous. Roman emper-

ors and heathen philosophers, sometimes by force and sometimes by argument, tried to check its progress, but in vain; in a few hundred years the religion of the despised Nazarene—the religion which began in the upper chamber at Jerusalem—had overrun the civilized world. *So that the birds, &c.* Even though this clause 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 the satisfaction for all the needs and wants of their souls. (See Ezek. xvii. 23.)

33. † \*Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.—Luke xiii. 20.

To the agricultural analogy just given, our Lord adds another, borrowed from domestic life and female industry, as if to leave no part of every-day experience unemployed in the elucidation and enforcement of religious truth. *That* parable exhibits the kingdom in its own independent existence, inherent life, and irresistible power; *this one* exhibits it in contact with the world, gradually overcoming and assimilating and absorbing that world into itself. *A woman.* 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 you." "Born of the Spirit." *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; Judges 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 these words. (See on Luke xiii. 21.)

The following points are noticeable in the parable: 1. As "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," so our holy religion had but a small beginning in the world, and has also in the human heart. 2. As this leaven was a foreign importation, so Christianity was not of an 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 centre, they reach an external development. 6. The Gospel and Divine grace, like the leaven, are destined to work on until their saving power reaches the full completion of its design—until the whole mass is leavened. Their triumph is sure. "The earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea." "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."

34. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: 35. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

† Ps. lvi. 2. † Rom. xvi. 25, 26; 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 9; Col. i. 25.

*All these things spake Jesus, i. e.,* on this occasion, refraining not only from all naked discourse, but even from all interpretation of these parables to the mixed multitude. *Spoken by the prophet.* (Ps. lxxviii.) The Psalms are classed with the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. This Psalm is ascribed to Asaph. As its author proposed to recount God's former dealings with His people not in a plain, prosaic style of declaration, but under the cover of poetical expression, which to some minds has a measure of obscurity as well as of interest, so the Saviour veiled his instructions under the cover of parables. *Kept secret,* or unrevealed of God. *From the foundation, &c.,* that is, from the beginning of the world, from the first creation of man.

36. † Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. 37. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. 38. The field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: 39. The enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. 40. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity: 42. And shall cast them into



a furnace of fire: there shall be walling and gnashing of teeth. 43. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xxiv. 14, xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15, 20; Luke xxiv. 47; Rom. x. 18; Col. i. 6. <sup>2</sup>Gen. iii. 13; John viii. 41; Acts xiii. 10; 1 John iii. 8. <sup>3</sup>Joel iii. 13; Rev. xiv. 15. <sup>4</sup>Chap. xviii. 7; 2 Peter i. 2. <sup>5</sup>Chap. iii. 12; Rev. xix. 20, and xx. 10. <sup>6</sup>Chap. viii. 12, verse 50. <sup>7</sup>Dan. xii. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 53. <sup>8</sup>Verse 9.

After dismissing His sea-shore congregation, our Lord returned to His usual residence in Capernaum. *Declare, explain to us. Son of man*, the most frequent title by which our Lord designates Himself. It is here evident that though the parable refers generally to the contest ever existing in the world between good and evil, holiness and sin, light and darkness, yet it has special reference to those manifestations of it which have taken place since the Divine power of Jesus Christ began to be displayed in the kingdom founded by Him. (See on verse 39.)

*The field is the world.* That the Church is not here meant is manifest, because, 1. Then there should be absolutely no discipline; no man should be shut out from communion, however heretical his opinions or vicious his practice might be. 2. Our Lord here uses the word *world*, not in a parable, but in the *explanation* of a parable, so that we have here His own definition of the *field*. 3. In Christ's commission to His servants, He uses the same word as here, "Go ye into all the *world* and preach the Gospel unto every creature." *The good seed, &c.* Here we see truths incorporated and embodied in living and responsible men. (See Hos. ii. 23; Zech. x. 9.) Christ places His beloved ones in the world, spreads them over it, as the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." *The wicked one, i. e., the devil.* Some people deny the existence of the devil, but the Lord Jesus Christ has no doubt on that point. The children of the wicked one and the children of the kingdom live together in the world, eat of the same bread, breathe the same air, and look upon the same light. *The devil.* (See on chap. iv. 1.)

*The harvest is the end of the world.* To the question which often presses upon thoughtful minds, Why are the wicked permitted to live? it may be replied, 1. If sinners were immediately punished, this world would not be a state of probation; obedi-

ence would not be voluntary, but forced. 2. If the wrath of God instantly crushed every transgressor, He would be the destroyer rather than the governor of the world. 3. Mankind are so variously and intimately blended together, that it is scarcely possible to strike an individual only without affecting others. God would rather spare a thousand enemies than injure one friend. 4. The goodness of God is to be acknowledged in this dispensation. He "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

*And the reapers are the angels.* See verses 41, 49, where the ministry of angels at the day of judgment is more particularly referred to; also chap. xxv. 31; Mark viii. 38; 2 Thess. i. 7; Rev. xiv. 19. The lot of the tares is to be gathered into bundles (verse 30) and consumed with fire. (See Heb. vi. 8.) *All things that offend, literally, all the stumbling blocks*, which are causes of offense and falling away from the truth, *and them which do iniquity*—evil persons. We have a proof of our Lord's prescience in the assumption that both wheat and tares should continue until the end of the world. *A furnace of fire.* The woe of hell is here described by death by fire, that most fearful of all forms of punishment, which was in use among the Chaldeans. (Jer. xxix. 22; Dan. iii. 6.) *Wailing and gnashing of teeth* are expressive of rage and impatience (Acts vii. 54), under the sense of intolerable pain and unutterable loss. Evil associates will increase each other's misery in the world of woe.

*Righteous*—those who possess God's favor. *Shine forth, &c.* (Dan. xii. 3.) This denotes their glory and blessedness, increased through the far-extending, benignant, blessed and happy influence which they exercise upon others. *The kingdom of their Father.* God is the Father of the righteous, they are His children, an intimate, blessed society. (John xvii. 23.) When comparing the glory of the righteous to the sun, our Lord is not to be understood as affirming its uniform equality, for as here He distributes in various degrees His gifts among the faithful, so also will He crown them with glory on the last day. *Who hath ears, &c.* (See on verse 9.)

44. ¶ Again, The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Phil. iii. 7, 8. Isa. lvi. 1; Rev. iii. 13.

The kingdom of heaven is not merely a general, it is also an individual, thing. Each man must have it for himself, and make it his own by a distinct act of his own will. *Treasure*. As men are naturally worldly in their tastes and associations, Christ here addresses them through such a medium. *Hid in a field*. The allusion is to the custom in old and Eastern countries, where there were no banks, and the state of society was unsettled and insecure, of depositing money and other valuables in the earth, which, long after, the owner having died or moved away, some one plowing or digging in the field might find. (Job iii. 21; Prov. ii. 4; Jer. xli. 18.) What a treasure is the Gospel! The tongue of an angel could not describe its value and preciousness. It meets and relieves every want of the soul, blesses us with all spiritual blessings, profits in the day of wrath, delivers from death, and ennobles in the world to come. (See Ps. xix. 10; exix. 72, 127; Prov. viii. 10, 11, 19; Col. ii. 3.) This precious treasure is deposited in the Word of God.

*Hath found, i. e.*, has begun to perceive the hidden mystery of the knowledge of Christ. No *seeking* is here presupposed, though, properly, all acting and striving on the part of man is a seeking after a treasure, after well-being, repose, peace. Though there is nothing casual in the salvation of a sinner, as to God, yet to *himself* the event may be wholly unlooked for. He is sometimes found of those that sought Him not (Isa. lxxv. 1), as in the case of Matthew, the Samaritan woman, and Saul in his journey of iniquity. *He hideth*, as the only way in which he could secure possession of it. The true Christian will make known the treasure to others, as Andrew did to Simon. (John i. 40, 41.) If he hide it, it will not be lest another should find it, but lest he himself should lose it. The man acts promptly and earnestly.

*For joy thereof*. Whatever there may have been of sacrifice before, there is now no more; self-denial is no longer painful, it is joy and bliss; what no external vio-

lence could have torn from the heart, the love of the world, fleshly wisdom, self-righteousness—all is abandoned. (Phil. iii. 4-11; Luke x. 42; Acts v. 40, 41.) *Buyeth that field*. We can offer no equivalent for salvation, nor is this the meaning of the words. In *this* way, were we to buy it, it would not be "without money and without price." The treasure in the field of the Word is *already a bought* salvation. The meaning is simply *exchange*, as in buying we part with something to gain something, hereby showing our estimation; for what stronger proof can we give of our valuation of an object, than parting with all we have for the sake of it.

45. ¶ Again, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls: 46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Prov. ii. 4, iii. 14, 15, and viii. 10, 19.

*A merchantman*. A lucrative branch of commerce carried on among the ancients was the search and the sale of pearls. This man was *seeking*—seeking, too, *goodly pearls*—pearls of value. Thus he represents, not the man who is living for sensual objects, such as pleasure, the acquisition of money, or distinction, but the man who is awakened to a sense of his destitution, and has begun to seek the true happiness, which he knows must exist somewhere for him, endeavoring to add attainment to attainment, sincerely, according to his light, and perhaps imagining that he shall find satisfaction in knowledge, science and accomplishments. His conscience is uneasy. He does not, perhaps, yet know that the object of his search is but *one*, for he is seeking *many* goodly pearls, but this will be revealed to him in due time. Such men, perhaps, were Simeon (Luke ii.), and Nathaniel (John i. 45.)

*One pearl of great price*. The vast sums which the wealthy and luxurious of that age gave for pearls of a superior size and the finest lustre, almost exceed belief. Julius Cæsar presented Servilia, the mother of Brutus, with one which cost L.48,457. The celebrated pearl ear-rings of Cleopatra were valued each at L.161,458. Clodius possessed one of nearly equal value. Lollia Paullina, a celebrated beauty, in the reign of Tiberius, wore two pearls of such an immense cost that the historian describes her as carrying a whole estate on her ears.

The king of Persia has a pear-shaped pearl so large and pure that it has been valued at L.100,000. The largest round pearl that has been known, belongs to the Great Mogul, and is about two-thirds of an inch in diameter.

*Went and sold.* The pearl seems to have been to the man an unexpected and surprising discovery, but when it was found, he went home and converted all his property, including the pearls previously purchased, into money, and bought it, and found it in measure far surpassing all his expectations. So, when the awakened soul comes to perceive the unparalleled, inconceivable riches of God's mercy in Christ, it gives up all to obtain it; the resolution is instantly taken, the transaction is irrevocably closed, and it finds in this *one* thing all it desires. (Luke x. 41, 42.) As in the *last* parable we have the believer hiding the precious Word with Christ in it within his heart, so in *this* one we have the believer setting forth the preciousness and glory of Christ before men, wearing this "pearl of great price" as his unspeakably costly ornament, and so "adorning the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things."

47. ¶ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: 48. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just: 50. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.—Chap. xxii. 10. \*Chap. xxv. 32. †Verse 42.

Two points of difference are manifest between this parable and that of the tares, which it somewhat resembles. *There*, the ungodliness of profession will be *seen* to be mingled more or less with the reality of true godliness until the end comes; *here*, the end will show *what* the net is gathering, but as it is dragged along it is *under* the water, and so out of view. *There*, we see the representation of the *vital* power of the Word in "the children of the kingdom;" *here*, we behold the *judicial* power of the Word in retaining its hold on every one with whom it is brought into contact, unto the judgment of the great day.

*A net.* The drag-net, here meant, is shot in a semicircular form into the sea. One side is kept close to the bottom by weights, and the other side drawn toward the surface by corks or bladders. When it is

drawn, both ends are slowly and steadily brought toward the land. *The sea* represents our world, with its restlessness, mutableness, storms, perils, its numerous and various population, and all these feeling at home in it. The casting of the net into *the sea*, and not into a single stream, as hitherto, exhibits the Gospel as mercifully designed for the race of mankind in its *universality*; none so *deep* that it does not descend to them; none so *high* that it does not reach them; none so *bad* that they are cast out, and none so *good* that they are passed by. It is not enough that the Gospel exist, it must be *preached*.

*Which, when it was full.* The Gospel cannot be preached in vain. Those who live in a Gospel land are necessarily embraced in the net. Whether they wish to be so or not, an invisible, all-embracing ministry is stretched over them, drawing them, generation after generation, gradually, secretly, surely, toward the boundary of this life, and over it into another, so that in this sense the net *gathers of every kind*, though this phrase means also men of every rank, class, nation, color. *So shall it be, &c.* As the fisherman, after hauling the net to the shore, separated the *bad*, *i. e.*, the decayed, and hence useless, from the *good*, so at the judgment, which is the end of the world, *the angels shall come forth* and make a permanent separation between the righteous and the wicked, showing, as they do so, that the Gospel must be either "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." (On verses 49, 50; see on verses 41-3.)

51. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. 52. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.—Cant. vii. 13.

*Unto them*—to the Twelve, He had spoken the first *four* parables in the hearing of the mixed multitude; the last *three* He reserved till He and the Twelve were alone. (Verse 36, &c.) The disciples having declared that they understood the parables, our Lord reminded them of the *use* they should make of the things they had learned; they should store them up in their minds, that they might have them ready upon every occasion, even as a master of a family provides all things necessary for different circumstances, and produces

them when wanted. The teachers among the Jews were called Scribes. The disciples were to become teachers, and would need a great store of truths for the instruction of others. Some of these truths might be called *new*, because not known to them before, and some *old*, because already familiar to their minds.

53. ¶ And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

*Departed thence*—left Capernaum.

54. ¶ And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, inasmuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? 55. Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56. And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

<sup>1</sup>Chap. ii. 23; Mark vi. 1; Luke iv. 16, 23. <sup>2</sup>Isa. xlix. 7; Mark vi. 3; Luke iii. 23; John vi. 42. <sup>3</sup>Chap. xii. 46. <sup>4</sup>Mark xv. 40.

*His own country, i. e., Nazareth*, the town of His childhood and youth. *He taught them in their synagogue*, or recognized place of worship. Though they had formerly maltreated Him, time had calmed their rage, and He was now suffered to teach without molestation. *Whence hath this man, &c.*, referring to the clearness, depth and wonderful power of His discourse. *Mighty works*, literally, *these powers*. Jesus had before told them from whence. (Luke iv. 18.)

*Is not this, &c.* All these inquiries, evidently expressive of contempt and unbelief, were no less absurd. The things which they implied were no arguments at all against Jesus, for a man's doctrine is not to be judged by his genealogy, but by the grounds which He adduces in order to establish it. *Brethren . . . sisters*. Are not their names all familiar to us, as members of a family in low and humble condition? From what source, then, we repeat, hath this vile impostor these marvelous powers, unless from the Satanic agency attribut-

ed to him by our scribes and religious teachers?

57. And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, ¶ A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. 58. And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xi. 6; Mark vi. 3, 4. <sup>2</sup>Luke iv. 21; John iv. 44. <sup>3</sup>Mark vi. 5, 6.

*Offended in him*. The inhabitants, by reason of the low state of the family of Jesus, and through ill-will from various causes, stumbled in respect to Him, and were induced to reject His claim to be the Messiah. *Not without honour, &c.* This is stated as a matter of general experience—as wide as life. Strangers judge of a minister only by his public acts or his official conduct, while his friends and neighbors have their minds so occupied with minor matters, such as the follies of their childhood and youth, and their education, that the greater are obscured to their vision. Then, again, it is one of the evil propensities of our nature, that envy arises from seeing former equals outstrip us. This is especially characteristic of coarser natures like the men of Nazareth.

*He did not many mighty works there*. He knew that His miracles would be disregarded and condemned by anticipation; and, besides, it is probable that the people did not afford Him an opportunity of performing miracles of power and mercy, such as alone lay within the bounds of our Lord's mission; hence, though He did *some* mighty works (Mark v. 5), He did not waste His divine power by doing *many*. *Unbelief*. Behold in this single word the secret of the everlasting ruin of multitudes of souls! They perish forever, because they *will* not believe. There is nothing beside, in earth or heaven, that prevents their salvation. (John v. 40.)

1. What is the first parable recorded in this chapter? 2. Who is the sower? 3. What is the seed? 4. How many kinds of soil are mentioned? 5. What classes of persons do they represent? 6. Explain verse 12. 7. What is meant in verses 16 and 17? 8. What things are we to observe concerning the parable of the sower? 9. What is meant by the "tares?" 10. Explain the parable of the grain of mustard seed. 11. Who are "the children of the kingdom?" 12. Who, "the children of the wicked one?" 13. What is to be done with the tares? 14. What is the destiny of "the righteous?" 15. What is the next parable? 16. Explain it. 17. Who is the "merchant-man?" 18. What is the "pearl?" 19. What is the "net?" 20. What, the "sea?" 21. What is said of the scribe, instructed unto the kingdom, &c.

## CHAPTER XIV.

<sup>1</sup> Herod's opinion of Christ. <sup>3</sup> Wherefore John Baptist was beheaded. <sup>13</sup> Jesus departeth into a desert place: <sup>15</sup> where he teacheth five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes: <sup>22</sup> he walketh on the sea to his disciples: <sup>34</sup> and landing at Genesareth, healeth the sick by the touch of the hem of his garment.

**A**T that time, <sup>6</sup>Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus.—<sup>1</sup>Mark vi. 14; ix. 7.

*Herod.* This was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great and of Malthace, a Samaritan. *Tetrarch* originally meant a ruler of a fourth part, of a kingdom, for instance, but came to be applied as occasion required, like any other general name of office. Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.

<sup>2</sup> And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. <sup>3</sup> For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. <sup>4</sup> For John said unto him, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." <sup>5</sup> And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

<sup>6</sup>Mark vi. 17; Luke iii. 19, 20. <sup>7</sup>Lev. xviii. 16; xx. 21. <sup>8</sup>Chap. xxi. 26; Luke xx. 6.

It immediately occurred to Herod that he had not long before most cruelly and wantonly murdered John the Baptist, an innocent, virtuous, holy and faithful man, and now he imagined that Jesus, whose fame was spreading, was the Baptist risen from the dead. A most striking instance of the force of conscience over a guilty mind. *For Herodias' sake.* Herod was living with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. He sent for John, expecting him to sanction his course, but the Baptist rebuked the adultery, and was cast into prison, which, as Josephus tells us, was the strong fortress of Macherus, in Perea, east of the Jordan. *It is not lawful, &c.* Thus plainly and boldly answered John, with a full knowledge of the danger he incurred in so doing. Noble example of fearless fidelity in proclaiming the truth! *When he would, &c.* Two considerations restrained Herod from putting John immediately to death: 1. From the Baptist's popularity, he was apprehensive that any violence offered to him might occasion a general insurrection against his government. 2. He himself regarded John with respect and veneration for his purity of character and the very courage with which he had condemned his licentious conduct.

(Mark vi. 20.) Hence he only cast him at present into the prison.

<sup>6</sup> But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. <sup>7</sup> Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask. <sup>8</sup> And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. <sup>9</sup> And the king was sorry; nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them that sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. <sup>10</sup> And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. <sup>11</sup> And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel; and she brought it to her mother. <sup>12</sup> And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

<sup>13</sup>Chron. xxii. 2, 3; Mark vi. 24. <sup>14</sup>Dan. vi. 14, 16. <sup>15</sup>Chron. xxvi. 16; John ii. 30; Rev. xi. 7.

*Daughter of Herodias*—by her former husband. Herod was pleased, not only with her graceful movements, but at this evidence of her and her mother's desire to contribute to the entertainment of himself and his guests. "A sedate and devout Christian," says one, "leaves dancing to goats, calves and children, and orders his steps according to the Word of God, and not the directions of the dancing master." *Promised with an oath, &c.* A very inflated and braggart promise, from one who was only governor of two provinces of Judea, and which he held as the vassal of the Roman emperor! How inconceivably foolish, rash, and mad, such an oath, on such an occasion! *Instructed of her mother,* more strictly, being wrought upon, instigated, and impelled by her mother. There is nothing so bad or devilish which an adulterous and shameless woman would not undertake and perform. (Prov. xxiii. 27, 28.)

*Was sorry.* The savage request of Salome appalled even the unfeeling heart of Herod himself. But, absurdly conceiving himself bound by his oath, and afraid lest he should be reproached by those around him with having broken his promise, thus exhibiting the sort of faith which the duelist or gambler does, he preferred the real guilt of murder to the false imputation of perjury, and granted the request. Then, without even the form of a trial, and privately, and in prison, the faithful reprover was slain; and his head, the veins bleeding, the hair clotted with gore, the eyes all wan and half open, was brought in a large dish, and given as a dutiful present from a guilty daughter to an adulterous and murderous mother, who (as Josephus

tells us) stuck the tongue full of needles! Blessed martyr! Dark and cheerless was the end reserved for thee, but now thou hast thy Master's benediction—"Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me" (Matt. xi. 6), and hast found the life thou gavest away. (Matt. x. 39.)

An historian tells us that Anetas commenced a war upon Herod, to avenge the insult of his daughter, and, in an engagement with Herod's army, defeated it with great slaughter. Afterward Herod and Herodias were banished by the Roman emperor to Lyons, in France, where they passed the remainder of their lives in disgrace. Another historian says that Salome met with a violent and untimely death. But though bold offenses are sometimes overtaken with punishment in this life, it is not always so, and this very fact is one of the things which prove a day of judgment. The wicked shall not go unpunished. The world shall yet know that there is a God that judgeth the earth. The blood of John the Baptist, and James the Apostle, and Stephen—the blood of Polycarp, and Huss, and Ridley, and Latimer, shall yet be requited. (Isa. xxvi. 21; Eccl. vi. 8.)

*took up the body, &c.* The disciples of the martyred prophet were permitted to enjoy the melancholy satisfaction of burying the mangled corpse. Whether the head was returned for interment, or whether the ladies kept it for further entertainment and insult, we know not; doubtless the disciples obtained it if they could. With bursting hearts these bereaved disciples *went and told* Jesus of their trouble. He could have explained the dark, perplexing event. He knew that John was taken away from the evil to come, and was spared the sight of His own ignominious death. But we do not know what He said to comfort these mourners. Yet we may be assured that He who "wept" by the grave of His friend Lazarus was not likely to receive such intelligence without deep emotion. None can sympathize with the sorrowful as the Son of God can. He came "to comfort all that mourn."

13. ¶ When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

¶ Chap. x. 23; xii. 15; Mark vi. 32; Luke ix. 10; John vi. 1, 2.

Jesus had heard that John was put to death, and most probably, also, that Herod thought that He was John risen from the dead, and desired to see Him. He, however, wished to avoid the court of Herod, and the snares of the tyrant, and even the more populous parts of the country, lest the people, enraged at the murder of John, and prone to sedition, might rise into actual rebellion, and He incur the blame.

*Departed thence by ship.* A comparison of this passage with John vi. 1, shows that Jesus retired to the eastern shore of Lake Tiberias, *i. e.*, the Sea of Galilee. From Luke also (ix. 10) we learn more particularly that He went to the vicinity of Bethsaida. There was a town of this name (also named Julias) on the east of the sea, as well as one on the west. *Into a desert place,* a thinly-settled place. When the crowd were aware of Christ's withdrawal, they flocked after Him.

14. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them; and he healed their sick.—Chap. ix. 36; Mark vi. 34.

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 (Luke ix. 11), 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.

15. ¶ And when it was evening, his disciples came to him: saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past, send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. ¶ Mark vi. 35; Luke ix. 12; John vi. 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. The suggestion of the disciples, that the crowd should be sent to the neighboring hamlets to seek the refreshment they required, as well as their inquiry (Mark vi. 37), show that the people had not brought provisions with them.

16. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

When Jesus, in order to try them, and awaken their attention to what was to follow, commanded the disciples to furnish the multitude with food, in ignorance of their Master's will, they alleged their inability to comply with His order, in view of the scantiness of their supply of food.

18. He said, Bring them hither to me.

These loaves, which were of barley, were the kind of bread then and still eaten by the poor of Palestine. With this small stock of homeliest fare, the Lord undertakes to feed all the multitude—*about five thousand men, besides women and children* (verse 21), a whole number, probably, not far from ten thousand persons! It was proper the loaves and fishes should be placed before Jesus, that His creative power might be definitely exerted, and its effects more fully seen by the multitude.

19. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, <sup>he</sup> blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.—<sup>k</sup>Chap. xv. 36.

Our Lord, through his disciples (Luke ix. 14), caused the crowd to 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.

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. There stands the master of the feast, majesty and benevolence beaming in His countenance, as He looks around on the gathered throng. By His side stand the disciples, with their eyes directed to Him, awaiting His command. He takes the scanty and humble provision into His hand before them all, probably elevating it in the sight of the people, and having blessed and broken it, He delivered it to the disciples, who in their turn distribute it to the different tables, if such they might be called, the marvelous multiplication taking place, so that all were satisfied.

Thus, that which the disciples 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. 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 developing itself into the gigantic and overshadowing oak. 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 more startling process, do we call it a miracle.

20. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

<sup>l</sup>Ex. xvi. 8, 12. <sup>m</sup>1 Kings xvii. 12, 16. <sup>n</sup>2 Kings iv. 43, 44; Prov. xlii. 25.

All, though in a state of extreme hunger, were fully satisfied. None of our Lord's miracles were better attested than this. Five or more thousand witnesses could not be deceived. It was done openly. The want of food, and the impossibility of obtaining secret supplies without detection, were known to all the people. Their senses convinced them that the miracle was real, they *saw* the small provision enlarged, 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. In after days, the disciples, in proclaiming Jesus as able by his death to save the souls of all believers, would remember with joy this wonderful occasion. The Greek word translated *baskets* means a wicker basket, such as the Jews were remarkable for taking on a journey to carry, it is said, both their provisions and hay to sleep on, that they might not have to depend on Gentiles, and so run the risk of ceremonial pollution. It was just in such a basket that Paul was let down from the wall. (Acts ix. 25.) The *fragments that remained* were a greater quantity than the original provision.

In the increase of the loaves and 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. ix. 24.) By feeding the hungry we shall often enrich ourselves, for God will bless our earthly substance. How much more will the humble Sabbath-school teacher and the devoted missionary find that the Christian receives in the ratio in which he gives, so that the greatest giver is always the greatest receiver!

21. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Five thousand is doubtless here used for a round number, but was exact enough for all practical purposes. (See on verses 18 and 20.)

22. † And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

*Constrained*—urged, induced. *Into a ship*, the boat in which they had come to the east side of the sea. *Unto the other side, i. e.*, of the sea of Galilee, "toward Capernaum" (John vi. 17), to Bethsaida, not the town of that name on the north-east coast, but the city of Andrew and Peter, near Capernaum.

23. † And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

†Mark vi. 46. †John vi. 16.

*A mountain*, literally, *the mountain*, a part of that range by which the lake of Genesareth is encircled. "To conceive of Jesus as praying only, or chiefly, to set us an example, misses the great truth that prayer, as communion with the Infinite Spirit, is felt even by a sinless being to be the normal state of the soul. Neither secret communion with God nor vigorous out-door work should be neglected. Let him who desires to be always in society, consider how different is his choice from that of Jesus. Solitude is needful to prevent the bad effects of necessary intercourse with the world. He who, like Isaac, meditates alone, will soon, like Isaac, find a friend to whom he can be joined in heart—the marriage of spirit with spirit; Christ the husband, himself the bride. Solitude may be the hot-house of sin. One may go into the mountain to pray, but take the multitude with him." Beautiful thought! while we are toiling with the storms of life, Jesus, on the mount of glory is interceding

for us. *When the evening was come*. In verse 15, *the evening* was mentioned, before the people were miraculously fed. The Jews reckoned two evenings, one from three o'clock until sunset, the other from sunset till dark. The Evangelist here refers to the *second* evening. *He was there alone*—none to interfere with the season of devotion which He sought. Private prayer was our Lord's usual practice. Our active engagements in ministering blessings to others should not prevent our private communion with God.

24. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, †tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.—†Isa. liv. 11.

*Midst of the sea*. John says (vi. 19) *five-and-twenty, or thirty furlongs*, about four miles. *Wind was contrary*. The gale was not only one of extreme violence, but directly against their course, so that they made slow progress. (See John vi. 18; Mark vi. 48.) How sudden are the transitions in human experience, from sunshine to storm, and from storm to sunshine! A few hours before, the disciples had been dealing out the miraculous stores to the joyous groups on the green grass, the Great Shepherd of Israel Himself tending them with loving interest; but now the sky is clouded, the Shepherd has left, and the sheep, under a clouded sky, are scattered like broken reeds in the trough of the sea! Let us not calculate too fondly or confidently on the permanency of any earthly good.

25. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

*Fourth watch, i. e.*, between three and six o'clock in the morning. *Jesus went to them*. Mark says (vi. 48) that "he saw them toiling and rowing." (Ps. xxxiv. 15; ciii. 13.) *Walking on the sea*. Those angry waves that tossed the ship of His disciples to and fro, obey the Son of God, and become a solid floor under His feet. That liquid surface, which was agitated by the least breath of wind, bears up the feet of our Redeemer like a rock.

26. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

†Joh ix. 8; Ps. xciii. 3, 4; civ. 3; Rev. x. 2, 5, 8.

How great the contrast—the heaving waters, the perturbed disciples, and the calm, majestic tranquility of the Great Lord! Jesus would appear to them first



like a dark, moving speck upon the waters, then as a human figure; but in the dark, tempestuous sky, and not dreaming that it could be their Lord, they take it for a spirit, and are seized with great fear. Herein the weakness of their faith is indicated. Had not Christ *constrained* them to enter into the ship, and were they not in the path of duty? How, then, should any evil befall them? It is a great comfort to us when we can feel sure that we are doing the will of God, for whatever trouble may threaten us, we can trust Jesus to bring relief in the storm.

27. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.—Acts xxiii. 11.

*Be of good cheer, &c. It is I, your Lord and Master, I who have often before spoken peace in your hours of trouble, I who but a few hours ago had compassion on the multitude, think you I will not much rather have compassion on you, my own sheep, who "follow me, and know my voice?"* The expression, *It is I*, what was it but the voice which cried of old in the ears of Israel, even from the days of Moses, "I am," "I, even I, am He?" Jesus will not *always* deny His people the sensible comforts of His grace and presence; generally in the darkest hour of their trial, when least expected, He reveals Himself. (Isa. xli. 10, 34, xliii. 1, 2.)

28. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

*If it be thou, &c.* This may mean that he wished a confirmation of the real presence of Christ by another miracle, or perhaps we may give it in this sense, *since or inasmuch as it is thou*, and then the general sentiment would be, *inasmuch as it is thou*, I am so relieved of fear, that I am willing at Thy command to step forth from the ship, and come to Thee upon the water. It is more than probable, however, that Peter had more ardor than his faith would justify. His faith was mixed with vain glory. There was a measure of presumption in it. His mind was not resting solely on Christ, he partly gloried in himself. Of course the Lord will select *me* to be the hero. It is those who feel their unfitness to occupy important stations, who are strengthened when exalted to them. Let us not rashly ask Jesus to bid us come

unto Him on the *water*, but ask Him rather to come unto *us* in the *ship*.

29. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

*Come.* Our Lord did not quite say *come to me*, but *come*, and Peter did *come*, but not quite to Jesus. Jesus came to him. *He walked on the water*—so that Peter actually performed the miracle.

30. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

The wind was as boisterous before, but Peter "*saw*" it not, seeing only the power of Christ, in the lively exercise of faith. Now he *sees* the fury of the elements, and immediately the power of Christ to bear him up fades before his view, and this makes him *afraid*, as how could he be otherwise without any *felt* power to keep him up? He then *begins to sink*, and finally, conscious that his experiment has failed, he casts himself, in a sort of desperate confidence upon his *Lord* for deliverance. Peter looked at the waves and listened to the wind, instead of looking to the Lord. If we look at the trial, and not at Him who sends it, we may well be alarmed.

31. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Mark iv. 40; xvi. 14; Luke xxiv. 25.

*And caught him.* This shows that Peter was not far from his Master when his faith failed him and he began to sink. Thus the soul of the believer often faints through doubt and distrust, even when within reach of an Almighty Saviour upon whom to recline. *O thou of little faith, &c.* Jesus did not find fault with him for *coming*, but for *doubting*. It was not that he trusted his Master too much, but too little. On various occasions Jesus showed the importance of a persevering confidence in His power. When He stretches forth His hand, and shows us His salvation, He makes us wonder that we could have doubted His power and grace at all.

32. And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Now were literally fulfilled the words of the Psalmist, "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." (Ps. evii. 29.) As it was with this ship so shall it be with the Church of God, which

has been, and is yet to be, environed with storms. Jesus has not left the foundering vessel to reel and plunge amid those moral tempests that are to close the great drama of time! No!—"in the fourth watch of the night"—when the darkness is thickest and the billows highest, "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Just as the new creation is about to put on its full robe of morning light, He will hush every billow, and mooring His vessel on the heavenly shore, take His storm-tossed Church to be *forever with its Lord.*

33. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. <sup>Ps. ii. 7; chap. xvi. 16, xxvi. 63; Mark i. 1; Luke iv. 41; John i. 49, vi. 69, xi. 27; Acts viii. 37; Rom. i. 4.</sup>

There was something in *Christ's* walking on the sea and stilling the tempest, so indicative of divine majesty and power, that it caused them to lose sight of that equally wondrous miracle of the loaves and fishes, wrought but a few hours previous. (See Mark vi. 52.) *Worshipped him.* Reverently bowing and making the following confession: *Of a truth thou art the Son of God.* Not merely the Messiah in the ordinary sense, but with special reference to His Divine character as revealed in the New Testament. The words are equivalent to the memorable confession made soon after, "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Chap. xvi. 16; see Ps. lxxxix. 25.)

34. ¶ And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. 35. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; 36. And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and was many as touched were made perfectly whole.

<sup>Mark vi. 53. Chap. ix. 20; Mark iii. 10; Luke vi. 19; Acts xix. 12.</sup>

The district of Gennesaret extended along the west side of the lake, to which it gave its name, nearly four miles, and was in breadth, upon an average, about two miles and a half. It is supposed to have been the same as Chinnereth, or Cinnereth, in the Old Testament. (See Num. xxxiv. 11.) It is likely that our Lord landed not far from Capernaum, which some think was situated in the land of Gennesaret, for He very soon went to that city. (John vi. 24, 59.)

As the inhabitants had previous knowledge of Jesus, they flocked to Him with their sick, only desiring leave to touch the *hem*, or *fringe* of His garment, and this being done, they were all immediately and perfectly healed. The healing virtue, however, lay not in their finger, but in their faith, or rather in Christ, whom their faith apprehended. "I feel," says *Chalmers*, "as if a great lesson hung on the efficacy of a touch, though it was only on the hem of the Saviour's garment. I feel as if it corresponded to faith in His name, when the power of conception was dull and feeble—so that we could frame no apprehension of His person. When I labor under the want of a lively manifestation, let the sound of His name uphold my confidence and be as ointment poured forth. But, O my God, that this confidence might continue undisturbed, do Thou cleanse my heart of all regard for iniquity!"

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1. What is said of Herod the tetrarch? 2. Why was John imprisoned? 3. What of Salome? 4. What became of Herod, Herodias and Salome? 5. What course did the disciples pursue in relation to John's body? 6. What miracle is here recorded? 7. Mention the particulars of it. 8. What lessons does it teach? 9. How did Jesus approach the disciples on the sea? 10. How were they affected by the sight of Him? 11. What did our Lord say to them? 12. What did Peter say and do? 13. What took place in "the land of Gennesaret?"

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## CHAPTER XV.

3 *Christ reproveth the scribes and Pharisees for transgressing God's commandment through their own traditions: 4 Teacheth how that which goeth into the mouth doth not defile a man. 21 He heareth the daughter of the woman of Canaan, 30 and other great multitudes: 32 and with seven loaves and a few fishes again feeds the multitude by miracle.*

THEN <sup>a</sup>came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2. Why do thy disciples transgress <sup>b</sup>the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

<sup>a</sup>Mark vii. 1. <sup>b</sup>Mark vii. 5. <sup>c</sup>Col. ii. 8.

Why do thy disciples, &c. (See Mark vii. 2, 5.) Though these scribes and Pharisees were the professed guardians of the sacred oracles, and professed to believe in God's inspired Word, the first fault they found with Jesus was, not that He transgressed that Word (for the Mosaic law did not require this washing of the hands), but that He transgressed the *tradition of the elders*, or those who had obtained among the people a distinguished name for wisdom. *They wash not their hands, &c.* For aught we know the disciples were as cleanly in their habits as the Pharisees, but in part, at least, through the influence of Jesus, they had ceased to wash their hands as an act of religious importance. Of this these hypocrites from Jerusalem complain. It is doubtless a criticism upon Jesus rather than upon the disciples.

3. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 4. For God commanded, saying, <sup>d</sup>Honour thy father and mother; and, <sup>e</sup>He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, <sup>f</sup>It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6. And honour not his father or his mother, <sup>g</sup>he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

<sup>d</sup>Ex. xx. 12; Lev. xix. 3; Deut. v. 16; Prov. xxiii. 22; Eph. vi. 2. <sup>e</sup>Ex. xxi. 17; Lev. xx. 9; Deut. xxvii. 16; Ps. xx. 20, and xxx. 17. <sup>f</sup>Mark vii. 11, 12.

Why. Our Lord replies as they had questioned Him. He here tears up the very foundation on which their whole reasoning was erected, and shows, by a manifest example, how tradition is often at variance with the Divine laws. Filial duty is most strongly enjoined in the law of God, and the neglect of it is represented as a very great sin. One of the proper modes for a child to express toward a parent that respectful affection which the word *honor*, in the fifth commandment, requires, is for the child to support the parent, either wholly or in part, when the parent's circumstances require and the child's permit this. To *curse* a parent, to

treat a father or mother with disrespect or cruelty, is condemned in the strongest terms in the Divine law. *But ye say, &c.* Allusion is here made to a method of rendering void the precept to relieve parents, practiced by the Jews at this time. It was held by the traditions of the elders, that if a son made a formal devotion to sacred purposes of those goods which he could afford for the relief of a parent, it was then not lawful for him to succor a parent. And, what was most strange, he was not held to be bound by his words to devote his estate to sacred uses, but not to relieve the parent he was inviolably bound. It seems probable that the Pharisees devoured the offerings which they instructed sons to make. *He shall be free*, that is, from the command of God mentioned in verse 4. (See Mark vii. 12.) That these words are in italic, shows that they are not in the original Greek, but are inserted by the English translators on their own authority, in order to make sense. *Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect*—set it aside, cancelled it. Hypocrites have ever been more zealous for forms of human appointment than the law of God.

7. <sup>s</sup>Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8. <sup>t</sup>This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their lips*; but their heart is far from me. 9. But in vain they do worship me, <sup>u</sup>teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

<sup>s</sup>Mark vii. 6. <sup>t</sup>Isa. xxix. 13; Ezek. xxxiii. 31. <sup>u</sup>Isa. xxix. 13; Col. ii. 18, 22; Titus i. 14.

*Ye hypocrites.* They were so called, 1. Because they placed holiness and religion in ceremonies of human invention. 2. Because being so superstitiously careful to avoid bodily pollutions, they left their hearts within full of hypocrisy and iniquity. One evidence of this was their attempt to get rid of the duty of providing for needy parents, under an appearance of piety toward God. *This people.* The pronoun here implies contempt. The *heart* alone worships God by its approach. *In vain do they worship me, &c.* The services they profess to perform to me, are performed from a regard, not to my authority, but to the authority of men. Their worship cannot serve the purpose of worship. It cannot be acceptable to me. It cannot be useful to them.

10. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

<sup>a</sup>Mark vii. 14. <sup>b</sup>Acts x. 15; Rom. xiv. 14, 17, 20; 1 Tim. iv. 4; Titus i. 15.

Jesus applied the principle to the ease before them. "Food, even although, from being eaten with unwashed hands, not so clean as it might be, cannot make a man morally impure," but such "evil thoughts," or rather "wicked reasonings" as come out of the mouths of the pharisaic scribes, when "they make void the commandment of God through their traditions," they indeed make a man morally impure. My disciples, in neglecting a mere human tradition, have incurred no guilt, have done nothing to displease God, but these men, with all their pretended sanctity, who would bring them in guilty before God, unfit for fellowship with Him, make it evident, by their wicked reasonings, which "proceed out of their mouth," that in their inner man they are "full of what is abomination" to Him who requires "truth in the hidden part." Intemperance in food or drink may indeed morally defile a man, but even in this case the pollution would arise from the wickedness of the heart.

12. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?

*This saying, i. e.,* His reply in verses 3-9, or perhaps the declaration in verse 11. These Pharisees were rendered indignant, not less by the superiority of Christ's arguments, than by the diminution of their reputation with the multitude. They had come to beat, not to be beaten; but now by a well-known traditional tenet of theirs, they were convicted of a direct violation of God's law.

13. But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

<sup>a</sup>John xv. 2; 1 Cor. iii. 12, &c. <sup>b</sup>Isa. ix. 16; Mal. ii. 8; chap. xxiii. 16; Luke vi. 39.

*Every plant.* Referring to the *teaching and traditions* of the Pharisees, not to their persons. At the same time we should also bear in mind what was said in chapter xiii. about the identification of individuals with the doctrines which they professed. We are not to fight with carnal weapons, but wait, preach, protest, pray. Sooner or later, as *Wycliffe* said, "the truth shall prevail." *Let them alone.* Have nothing to do with

them. Do not desire their patronage or coöperation. With all their sanctimonious pretensions to wisdom and piety, they are the stupid and wicked teachers of a stupid and wicked people. And as *blind leaders of the blind*, they will precipitate themselves, along with those who have committed themselves to their directions, into the pit of perdition.

Though to all men, especially to well-meaning though mistaken brethren in Christ, we ought to avoid giving unnecessary offense, yet, as our Lord's conduct here shows, with regard to everything in the shape of religious doctrine, which we cannot find in the Bible—with regard to everything in the shape of religious institution, unsanctioned by its authority, we ought not to refrain from speaking the truth, from the fear of giving offense to influential, and, in a worldly point of view, respectable men.

15. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.—<sup>a</sup>Mark vii. 17.

The word *parable* here means the *weighty sentiment* expressed in verse 11. It is not that Peter did not understand it, but he found it difficult, from his prejudices, to distinguish between the symbol and the reality. Indeed he could hardly believe his ears, that a distinction of meats availed not, and therefore asks an explanation. (See Acts x. 9, &c.)

16. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?—<sup>a</sup>Chap. xvi. 9; Mark vii. 18.

*Are ye*—My own disciples, *also*, that is, as well as the Pharisees, *yet*, after all my example and instruction, *without understanding*, of the difference between physical uncleanness and moral defilement? There is a slight shade of censure, that His disciples did not understand what was addressed to the multitude (verse 11), with the command that they, who were far below the apostles in spiritual discernment, should hear and understand it. (Isa. xxviii. 9, 10.; Heb. v. 12.)

17. Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18. But those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.—<sup>a</sup>1 Cor. iv. 13. <sup>b</sup>James iii. 6.

Familiar though these sayings of our Lord have now become, what freedom from bondage to outward things do they proclaim, on the one hand, and on the other, how searching is the truth which

they express—that nothing which enters from without can really defile us, and that only the evil that is in the heart, that is allowed to stir there, to rise up in thought and affection, and to flow forth into voluntary action, really defiles a man!

19. †For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; 20. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man. \*Gen. vi. 5, and viii. 21; Prov. vi. 14; Jer. xvii. 9; Mark vii. 21.

*Evil thoughts*, such as the Pharisees entertained in evading the fifth commandment—the first motions of sin in general, as well as wicked designs. *Murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts*, sin against the sixth, seventh and eighth commandments. The plural number adds emphasis. *Blasphemies* (sins against the third commandment), indicate concealed and open enmity (blasphemy against God and man). How appalling is this black catalogue! Such is the description by the tender, merciful, truth-speaking Saviour, of every human heart in its natural state. How much reason have we to pray for a clean heart! (Ps. li. 10.) *These are the things*—not all the things, but plentiful specimens of them. Men are inclined to lay the blame of their sins on temptation—the tempter, and so to excuse themselves; but our Lord tells us *they proceed out of the heart. Defileth not a man.* In the very word *man* lies an argument: for the spiritual nature, which is the better part in man, is not reached by outward filth. “And yet,” says one, “how many scruple to commune with unwashed hands, but scruple not to commune with unwashed consciences!”

21. † Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 22. And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. 23. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, send her away; for she crieth after us. 24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 26. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. 27. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. 28. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. \*Chap. x. 5, 6; Acts iii. 25, 26, and xiii. 46; Rom. xv. 8. \*Chap. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2.

*Tyre and Sidon.* The two great Phœnician seaports lying upon the Mediterranean Sea in the north-western part of Judea, but here denoting the territory generally to the frontiers of which Jesus now came.

*A woman of Canaan.* She was a Gentile, Living at a distance from the Lord, and from all the privileges of Judea, she may have become acquainted with the character of Jesus by the fame occasioned by His discourses, and the miracles He had performed, either for the benefit of His own people or for the good of others. *Came out of the same coasts.* In making this visit, how many obstacles had she to encounter, arising from distance, delicacy, danger, duty to her daughter, &c. *Cried unto him*, &c. Mark the brevity, fullness and earnestness of this petition! Her addressing Jesus under the character of *Lord* and *Son of David*, amounted to confessing Him to be the Messiah. *Have mercy on me*, &c. So entirely had she made her daughter's misery her own, that she seeks mercy for herself.

*Answered her not*, &c. “The Word has no word, the Fountain is sealed, the Physician withholds his remedies.” How unlike His accustomed kindness this silence of our Lord! Who could understand this as any other than a repulse? But the petitioner relies upon His promises as a rock which cannot fail her. Many times, in our experience, we cannot explain God's proceedings, but have to wait and wonder, and wonder and wait. But let us not construe rashly His dealings with us, lest we misconstrue. “*The Lord trieth the righteous.*” If we would be really blessed of Him, the determination of Job must be ours. “*Though he slay me yet will I trust him.*” Though our trials should be severe, and our prayers be unanswered, we must continue to pray. Behind a frowning cloud He often hides a smiling face. *His disciples came*, &c. The expression is an equivocal one; let us hope that, unable to hear that mother's voice unmoved, they took up her cause—“yield to her request, heal her daughter, for it is wretched to hear her reiterated supplications.”

*I am not sent*, &c. Here is a kind of exclusion, which seems to place her beyond the reach of His communion. Jesus had come solely to the Jews, in the sense that His personal ministry was to be exercised only within the limits of Judea. How must this reply have affected the poor petitioner. Silence was discouraging, but

this must have been more so. That might be imputed to other causes; she might suppose He was considering her request, and though He had said nothing in her favor, yet He had said nothing against her: this, however, is not only giving her a denial, but giving the *reason* of it, which would seem to render it irrevocable. To an eye of sense, it would now seem to be a lost cause. It is not so, however, to an eye of faith.

*Lord help me.* The more she was repulsed, the closer she crept to Him. Sent to me or not, here Thou art, Oh, Saviour of the unfortunate! Called or not, here am I, a wretched mother! Thou *must* hear and answer my petition. *It is not meet, &c.* The *children* are the Jews, the *dogs* are the Gentiles. Feeling herself unworthy, she is not offended by the seeming severity of this reply. *Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat, &c.* How invincible a faith, what wonderful perseverance, what deep humility! The Saviour could not cast her lower than she was content to cast herself. No term of reproach that He could apply to her, which she was not most willing to accept, and from which she could not gather arguments for His mercy. Even the very depth of her degradation only forms a stronger plea for the extension of His love. If a dog, then still one of the household, with no title indeed to the children's bread, but with a stronger claim upon the crumbs than one more distant, though less degraded.

*Great is thy faith, &c.* Her faith, overcame obstructions, not physical, as in the case of the paralytic, for whom the roof was uncovered, not personally hostile, as those of Bartimeus, who cried the more for the rebuke he received from those who were near Jesus, but obstructions apparently in Christ Himself. *Be it unto thee, &c.* What a God-like declaration is this! Her faith had entreated Him as Lord, and as such He now addresses her. "Satan shall be dethroned, and thy daughter shall be healed." *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* "Thy faith can be trusted, it will dictate that which is right." Illustrious woman! She has conquered the King of kings and Lord of lords; all the perfections of Deity now come forth to her help;

Omnipotence moves at her bidding to effect her desire; her will for a time is as the will of God. *And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Here is additional evidence that the woman's faith was *great*. She doubted not the word of Jesus, nor asked for a sign that her desire was granted, but without delay departed to her home, in the confidence that her daughter was well.

29. † And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.—† Mark vii. 31. † Chap. iv. 18.

*Departed . . . thence . . . . unto the sea of Galilee*—from the north-west to the north-eastern part of Galilee. *Went up into a mountain*, literally, the mountain, *i. e.*, the mountainous ridge environing the lake. *Sat down there.* He did not volunteer to bid the people approach, but awaited them.

20. † And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them: 31. Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel.—† Isa. xxxv. 5, 6; chap. xl. 5; Luke vii. 22.

*Great multitudes, &c.* His fame had before filled that region (iv. 25); and now, on His coming thither, the people gathered around Him in great numbers, to be healed. *Maimed.* This word means those who had lost an arm, or a leg, or a foot, and hence hardly any of the miracles of our Lord were more illustrious and amazing, than the recovery of such. We have no reason to doubt that at the resurrection morn the limbs which any of God's people may have lost, will be restored to them perfect and beautiful. *Cast them down, &c.*—brought them before Jesus and laid them down, as expressive of the humility of their submission. It may be that we ourselves owe to the kindness of our friends, under God, in times past, the salvation of our souls; a mother who long prayed for us in secret and with many tears, or a relative who expostulated with us in the days of our folly, persuaded us to go to the house of God, and encouraged us to forsake the world, and to serve the Lord. *And he healed them.* There is no ailment of heart, no spiritual complaint, Jesus cannot cure. *Glorified the God of Israel.* They all, whether Jews or Gentiles, acknowledged this to be a wonderful work of mercy, wrought by the God of Israel, and such as no other god was able to do.

32. ¶Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.—Mark viii. 1.

*I have compassion.* While the people forget hunger in admiration, Jesus pities them, and is not affected by their praise of His miracles. A great crowd of men and women is always a solemn sight. It should stir our hearts to feel that each is a dying sinner, and each has a soul to be saved. Of all the feelings experienced by our Lord when upon earth, there is none so often mentioned as “compassion.” This should encourage all who are hesitating about beginning to walk in God’s ways, as it shows that the Saviour will receive them graciously, forgive them freely, and abundantly supply all their need. *They continue with me*—other sufferers being laid before Him from time to time. *And have nothing to eat*—their supply of food was now exhausted. It was the interest of the people to remain with Jesus, and yet He seized that as a reason for conferring a new benefit upon them. *I will not send them away fasting, &c.* How beautiful that He who governs angels, should condescend to notice even the humblest wants of the human body! He never sent men away in want.

33. ¶And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?—2 Kings iv. 43.

This miracle must not be confounded with the similar one recorded in chapter xiv. 15–21. *That* was performed for the inhabitants who followed Jesus and anticipated His debarkation from the western side of the lake, and took place upon the plain of Butaiha, near the village of Bethsaida. *This* took place when Jesus was secreting Himself from Herod Antipas, having rapidly and quietly passed to the coast north-east of the lake, out of the dominion of Herod, and it is in the country, probably, of the Decapolis, that the miracle takes place.

*Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, &c.* It may seem strange that the disciples should ask this question the second time. (Chap. xiv. 17.) But can we remember no similar instance of forgetfulness in our own history? Has not the Lord, on many occasions in time past,

gone beyond our highest expectations? And yet are we not prone in every fresh difficulty to doubt His power and His faithfulness? Ever thus is it in times of difficulty and distress; each new difficulty appears insurmountable, as one from which there is no extrication. (See Ex. vii. 1–7, xvi. 13; Num. xi. 21, 22; 1 Sam. xvii. 34–37; 2 Chron. xv. 7, 8; Ps. cvi. 13.) Besides, even remembering how their Master had once spread a table in the wilderness, we can readily see how the disciples might have doubted whether He would choose a second time to put forth His creative might; at any rate, they had not the boldness to call for a miracle. Whenever we are placed in difficulties, we should remember “the years of the right hand of the Most High.”

34. And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. 35. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 37. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. 38. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

¶Chap. xiv. 19. ¶1 Sam. ix. 13; Luke xxii. 19.

(On verses 35–38; see notes on chap. xiv. 15–21.) *Gave thanks.* What a beautiful model and precedent for us! The Lord of Glory gave thanks for the bread that He held in His hand. It is right to give thanks even before food (Acts xxvii. 35), and then it is the same as a *blessing*, for it is an acknowledgment of the Divine goodness for the past and the future. *And they did all eat, and were filled.* The bread here distributed signified that flesh which Jesus would give for the life of the world. Too many persons have no appetite for the heavenly feast; they sit as God’s people sit, but they partake not of the sacred fare; they go away to feed again upon ashes, and at length die without having tasted of *that* bread, which if a man eat, he shall live forever. *Baskets*—“hand-baskets,” *i. e.*, baskets with handles. But those mentioned in the former miracle, were suspended from the shoulder. *Four thousand men, &c.* On the same principle referred to in notes on xiv. 21, we may suppose the whole number fed on this occasion, to have been no less than eight thousand. It may be noticed that with regard to numbers, Matthew is of all

the Evangelists the most particular. This, from his previous occupation, was to be expected from him.

39. † And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coast of Magdala.—† Mark viii. 10.

*The multitude*—the four thousand whom he had miraculously fed. *Took ship*—the vessel, mentioned in chap. xiv. 33. *Magdala*. Mark (viii. 10.) says, *Dalmanutha*. The statements are easily reconciled. *Magdala* was one of the many “Migdols” (watch-towers) of Palestine, and from it the sur-

name “Magdalene” was probably taken, to denote the residence of one of the Marias. It is probably the modern *el-Medjel*, on the west side of the lake of Galilee, about three miles north of *Tabariyeh*. *Magdala* and *Dalmanutha* were contiguous, so that it might with propriety be said that our Lord came into the vicinity of the one or the other. *Dalmanutha* may have been a village, but it cannot now be identified with certainty.

1. What did the scribes and Pharisees say to Jesus? 2. How did He answer them? 3. Explain verses 13 and 14.
4. What did Peter ask of Jesus? 5. What was his reply? 6. What does Christ say proceed out of the heart?
7. Who approached Jesus in behalf of her daughter? 8. State the particulars of the interview. 9. Also the result.
10. What lessons does this case teach? 11. What is said of Christ's healing? 12. Why is this miracle of feeding the multitude not to be confounded with the similar one in chapter xiv.? 13. After this miracle, where did Jesus go?

## CHAPTER XVI.

1 *The Pharisees require a sign, 6 Jesus warneth his disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, 13 The people's opinion of Christ, 16 and Peter's confession of him, 21 Jesus foresheweth his death, 23 reproving Peter for dissuading him from it: 24 and admonisheth those that will follow him, to bear the cross.*

† *The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.*

‡ *Chap. xii. 38; Matt. viii. 11; Luke xi. 16, xii. 54-56; 1 Cor. i. 22.*

*Tempting, i. e.,* desiring to entrap Jesus. *A sign from heaven.* Probably they wished some peculiar manifestation from thence, as “fire from heaven” (1 Kings. xviii. 23-38), or a glorious appearance in the sky.

2. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.* 3. And in the morning, *It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering.* O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? 4. † A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. ‡ And he left them, and departed.

‡ *Chron. xii. 32. †Chap. xii. 39. ‡Jonah i. 17; Luke xi. 29.*

“You are quite competent to determine the weather by the face of the sky, and, if you were teachers of the truth, and exercised the same simplicity of purpose and careful observation, you would be able to pronounce upon the age of the world at which we are arrived, and the facts that are before you, from signs that are as unequivocal and decisive as those that

relate to the foul or the fair weather.”

Our Lord refers here to the evidence furnished by the accomplishment of the ancient prophecies (xliv. 10; Isa. xi. 1. xxxv. 5; Dan. ix. 24), and by the miracles he performed, that the time of the Messiah was at hand. Christians should watch the moral aspect of the times. *A wicked, &c.* (See on chapter xii. 39.) *Left them*—in mingled sorrow and displeasure. A cavilling spirit may drive away the Son of God. There is only *one* greater calamity than being left by Jesus; it is, to hear Him say, “Depart from me.”

5. † And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6. Then Jesus said unto them, †Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. 7. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is because we have taken no bread.* 8. *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? 9. †Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 10. †Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 11. How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? 12. Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

† *Mark viii. 14. †Luke xii. 1. †Ex. xii. 15, 19; Lev. ii. 11; 1 Cor. v. 6, 8; Gal. v. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17. †Chap. xiv. 17, John vi. 9. †Chap. xv. 34. †Acts xxiii. 8.*

*To the other side*—to Bethsaida Julias, whither Christ had gone. *Had forgotten,*



&c. The disciples must have been far from any longing for luxuries, when they took so small care even for the very necessities of life. *Take heed, &c.* Zeal for purity of doctrine is necessary. Error in *principle* is the parent of vice in *practice*. *Leaven* here denotes false doctrine, because it spreads, works secretly and silently, and insinuates itself into and changes the whole character. *It is because, &c.* The disciples thought that as they would now have to buy bread, Jesus wished them to be careful that it might not be such as had been subjected to the leaven of the Pharisees, lest they should be polluted by it.

*O ye of little faith, &c.* Jesus rebuked them for their want of *faith* and of *spiritual understanding*. How could they suppose that the leaven of the Pharisees was worse than any other leaven? How could they imagine that He would utter so solemn a warning on so petty a subject? Had He not lately shown them that nothing but *sin* could pollute? Had He not lately shown them His power in a miraculous way to supply food? (See xiv. 15-21, xv. 22-8.) As the result of these inquiries, the disciples were made sensible of their mistake.

13. ¶ When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" 14. And they said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." 15. He saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" 16. And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17. Mark viii. 27; Luke ix. 18. 18. Chap. xiv. 2; Luke ix. 7-9. 19. Chap. xiv. 33; Mark viii. 29; Luke ix. 20; John vi. 69, xi. 27; Acts viii. 37, ix. 20; Heb. i. 2, 5; 1 John iv. 15, v. 5.

*Cesarea Philippi*, a town in the northern part of Judea, in the vicinity of Mount Hermon. *Whom do men, &c.* Jesus proposed these inquiries in this the beginning of the *second great division* of His ministry on earth, introductory to His sufferings and death, that He might take occasion from the confession of His disciples as to His Messiahship, to grant them a deeper view into the nature of His *work*, and to establish them more firmly in their faith in His *person* and His character. *Some say . . . . John the Baptist.* This was an echo of that which was talked of at Herod's court. (Chap. xiv. 2; Luke ix. 7-9.) *Elias.* (Comp. Mal. iv. 5.) *Jeremias.* The belief prevailed from the passage last quoted, that at the time of the Messiah different prophets would again appear, and the Jews

held Jeremiah to be the greatest of the prophetic class. *One of the prophets*, some one of the Old Testament prophets. It should not surprise us to find the same variety of opinions about Christ and His Gospel in our times. God's truth disturbs the spiritual laziness of men, obliges them to think, and makes them begin to talk, reason, speculate, and invent theories to account for its spread in some quarters, and its rejection in others.

*Whom say ye, &c.* 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. Peter's reply was in his own name, and in that of his brethren. He did not reply, "we say," lest that should not appear decisive enough, but, as if he said, we have not the least doubt of it. *Thou art, &c.* It is a most concise and yet comprehensive confession of faith. 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*, the Son of the living God! (See Dan. ix. 21.) *Living*—a character applied to the Supreme Being, not only to distinguish Him from the dead idols of paganism, but also to point Him out as the source of life, *present, spiritual* and *eternal*. 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.

17. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

18. Eph. ii. 8. 19. 1 Cor. ii. 10; Gal. i. 16. 20. John i. 42. 21. Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14. 22. Job xxxviii. 17; Ps. ix. 13, cvii. 18; Is. xxxviii. 10. 23. Chap. xviii. 18; John xx. 23.

Though it is not to be doubted that Peter, in this noble testimony to Christ, only expressed the conviction of all the Twelve, yet since he alone seems to have had clear enough apprehensions to put that conviction in proper and suitable words, and courage enough to speak them out, and readiness enough to do this at the right time—so he only, of all the Twelve, seems to have met the present want, and communicated to the saddened soul of the Redeemer, at the critical moment, that balm which was needed to cheer and refresh it. Nor is Jesus above giving indication of the deep satisfaction which this speech yielded Him, and hastening to respond to it by a signal acknowledgment of Peter in return. *Blessed art thou*—highest blessings, to be the confessor and Apostle of the *Son of God*. *Bar*, which signifies *son*, was added to the name Simon, to distinguish him from others of the same name. *Simon* means “hearing;” and *Jona* means “dove.” *For flesh and blood*, &c. Simon, like Paul, had “not conferred with flesh and blood,” (Gal. i. 16), that is the lips of frail and fallible humanity had not been his instructors in the great mystery of the Gospel: neither had the suggestions of Reason guided him to the discovery of so great a truth, but he had derived his teachings directly from God Himself. The connection between the word “*for*,” and the preceding part of the verse, shows in what the blessedness of Simon eminently consisted. “No man can say that Jesus is the Christ, except by the Spirit,” and Peter, in an eminent degree, possessed the Spirit. (Chap. xi. 27.)

The word *revealed* does not seem, in this place, to mean the immediate communication of knowledge by inspiration, but the removing of those proud and carnal prejudices which *veiled* the hearts of others, that they could not understand what was in itself most plain. A conviction was wrought in Peter's mind of his Master's Messiahship, by His miracles and doctrines, but this was, nevertheless, the result of the Divine influence upon his heart—he was “taught of God,” and “his understanding,” as to this subject, “was opened to understand the Scriptures.”

*I say also unto thee*—as thou hast borne

such fearless and correct testimony to my character. *Thou art Peter* (*petros*), i. e., “a stone.” The word in Syriac is *Cephas*. (See John i. 42). *Upon this rock*—this true confession of thine—that I am the MESSIAH, that I am come to reveal and communicate THE LIVING GOD, that the dead, lost world may be saved—upon this very rock, Myself, thus confessed, alluding probably to Psalms cxviii, 22, which see. It will be observed that our Lord did not say, *on thee, Peter, I will build*, &c. (which would have been natural, if such had been his meaning), but *changed* immediately the expression, and said, *upon this rock*, &c.—thus showing that he neither addressed Peter, nor any other of the Apostles. The word *petra*, here translated *rock*, has the generic sense, a *mass*, or *ledge* of rock, and is never used in the signification of *petros* (Peter), a *single stone*. It is employed here, not only to distinguish the word from *petros*, the proper name in *thou art Peter*, but as more consentaneous with the idea of *foundation*, which in the case of edifices designed to be durable, was composed, if possible, of the firm and stable rock. (See chap. vii. 24.)

*I will build my church*. God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built on the rock of the promised seed. (Gen. iii. 15.) But now it was requisite that the church should have a new charter, as Christian, in relation to a Christ already come. The word “church” means literally those *called out*. Jesus here calls the church His own. This is a magnificent expression concerning Himself—nowhere else occurring in the Gospels. Christ as the Master-builder, builds his church by persons commissioned by Him, acting under His direction, and assisted by His spirit, and this building is a progressive work. The church is “the blessed company of all faithful people.” It is the whole body of believers of every age, and tongue, and people. (Eph. i. 22; i. Cor. x. 32.) It is a church composed of all who are washed in Christ's blood, clothed in Christ's righteousness, renewed by Christ's Spirit, joined to Christ by faith, and epistles of Christ in life. It is a church which is one body, which has only one Head, and Jesus Christ Himself “is the Head of the

body." (Eph. v. 25-27; Col. i. 18.) Observe the remarkable reference to the Trinity, in the building (Eph. ii. 18-22), where the character, privilege, ground, manner and object of the building are described. Let it be observed, it is not *thy* church, but *mine*. Peter remembered this, when he cautioned ministers *not to lord it over God's heritage*.

That Peter was not designated as *the rock* on which the church was to be built, is evident. "Rock" is the regular figurative expression in the Scriptures for a Divine Protector. (Deut. xxxii. 4, 18, 30; 2 Sam. xxii. 2, 32, and many other places.) Paul testifies that Christ was the rock of the primitive church (1 Cor. x. 4), and a *foundation*. (1 Cor. iii. 2.) Peter proclaimed this truth. (Acts iv. 11, 12.) He testifies that he, with the rest of the believers, was built on this foundation. (1 Peter ii. 5.) In the same epistle (chap. i. 1.) he designates his office or title as *an apostle*, not *chief bishop*, and in chap. v. 4, he expressly styles Jesus Christ "the Chief Shepherd." The other Apostles, as well as Peter, are represented as being the foundation of the church. (Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14.) The powers conferred upon Peter were soon, even if not now, conferred upon the other Apostles (John xx. 23), and indeed upon the entire church. (xviii. 18.) Peter himself never assumed official authority over his fellow-Apostles. Paul so conducted himself toward Peter as to show that he recognized in him no superiority of rank. On one important occasion (Acts xv.), James towers quite above Peter in perception and influence. (Gal. ii. 11-14.) Clearly, therefore, Peter was only *one of the builders* in this sacred edifice. (Eph. ii. 20.)

*The gates of hell*, &c. "Gates" are tropically put for persons assembled there for business. The infernal powers are here represented, who, from their invisible stronghold, manifest their visible hostility. *Shall not prevail*—shall not overpower. The battle may waver long and fearfully, but the rock-built fortress shall finally prove victorious. The everlasting love of God, the mediation and intercession of Christ, and the Divine promises, all insure this. "The Church of God," says *Dr. Krummacher*, "is like a palm tree, which

flourishes the more vigorously the more it is pressed down. Every embarrassment is to her but as the weight to the clock, which keeps it going; and the most violent storms are to the Church but a brisk wind in the sails, which impels the vessel more rapidly toward the harbor." Let us rejoice in the security of Christ's Church, and desire above all things to be true members of it. How Divine its origin, how inestimable its privileges, how vast its honors, how imperishable its happiness! *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*. To understand this as meaning that the right of admitting souls to heaven was to be placed in Peter's hands, is preposterous. This office is the special prerogative of Christ Himself. (Rev. i. 18.) It has to do with admission to and rejection from the membership of the Church. All the authority it conveyed was soon expressly extended to *all the Apostles*. (See chap. xviii. 18; also, John xx. 23; 1 Cor. v. 3, 5; Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14.) In chapter xviii. 18, let it be observed, it was directed by our Lord that where there was a quarrel between brethren, it was to be brought, in the last resort, before the Church, or Church meetings (as explained in verse 20), whose decision was to be final, and the Saviour adds, "Whatsoever ye"—the plural number—"shall bind on earth," &c. Such honor does the Lord of the Church put upon its lawful assemblies.

*Whatsoever thou shalt bind*, &c. How are we to understand this? As meaning that Peter was to have any power of forgiving sinners? Such an idea is derogatory to Christ's special office as our Great High Priest. It is certain that in any literal and authoritative sense, such power was never exercised by one of the Apostles, and plainly was never understood by themselves as possessed by them or conveyed to them. The power to intrude upon the relation between men and God, cannot have been given by Christ to His ministers in any but a *ministerial* or *declarative* sense—as the authorized interpreters of His word, while in the *actings* of His ministers, the real nature of the power committed to them is seen in the exercise of *church discipline*. As for the special inspiration the

Apostles received, to lay down rules and regulations for the guidance of the Church on disputed questions, *binding* or forbidding some things, and *loosing* or allowing other things, as, for example, the decision of the council at Jerusalem, that the Gentiles need not be circumcised. (Acts xvi. 19.) This was a commission specially confined to themselves. In discharging it they had no successor. With them it began, and with them it expired.

20. "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. 21. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23. But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me. Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. \*Chap. xvii. 9; Mark viii. 39; Luke ix. 21. \*Chap. xx. 17; Mark viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 33. Luke ix. 22, xviii. 31, xxiv. 6, 7. \*See 2 Sam. xix. 22. \*Rom. viii. 7.

*Tell no man.* The premature and unreserved avowal of this truth must, without perpetual miracles, have excited the ill-judging populace to such measures, as would have given the scribes, priests and Pharisees an occasion against Jesus, and even rendered the Romans jealous of His popularity, and thus He might have been cut off before His time. Christ's Messianic life had to be actually completed before His disciples were to testify of Him as Christ. Nay, the Lord Himself was to be the first publicly to announce it to the people, in the hour of His trial, so soon to be followed by His death. (Matt. xxvi. 64.)

*From that time, &c.* Now Jesus announces His coming sorrows more distinctly than He had done before. He did this, 1. To show the disciples that he was really God (as they had just before confessed Him to be), by His foretelling things to come; 2. To convince them more and more of their error, that He was to reign as a temporal prince; and, 3. To prevent them being offended at His sufferings, and to prepare them for their own. *Jerusalem.* The place where He was to suffer. (Luke ix. 31; xiii. 33.) There is the site of the Old Testament theocracy. There have the sacrifices of the law, and the blood of the Old Testament atonements, 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. *Suffer many things, arraignment,*

*trial, execution. Be killed.* Prefigured by the killing of the paschal lamb. (Comp. Ex. xii.; 1 Cor. v. 7; Isa. liii. 7; Acts viii. 32; John xviii, 40.) *Raised again.* (See on chap. xii. 40.)

*Took him.* Suddenly interrupted Him, or, perhaps, took Him aside. *Rebuke him.* Earnestly remonstrate against what Jesus had said about suffering and dying. *Be it far, &c.* "God forbid," or "Be merciful to Thyself." It is an exclamation of surprise and tender solicitude. Peter's motives were good; but how little did he know then (though he afterwards knew it so well), that the destinies of the world hung upon that being done which he said *should not* be done. *And said unto Peter.* Jesus, who, in Peter's remonstrance, beheld, with pain, the instinctive abhorrence of the natural mind to the doctrines of the cross, replied to him by a rebuke, the sternness and severity of which come out strongly in contrast with the commendation the same Apostle had lately received. (1 Cor. x. 12.) *Get thee behind me, remove out of my way;* be not an obstacle in my path of duty. *Satan.* Peter, though a true believer, yet on this occasion acted the part of Satan, or an evil counsellor, toward his Master. Our Lord would have us regard the crucifixion as the central truth of Christianity. Right views of His vicarious death, and the benefits resulting from it, lie at the very foundation of Bible-religion. The sum of all our hopes must be, that "Christ has died for us." (1 Thes. v. 10.) Never let us forget this. On matters of Church government, and the form of worship, men may differ from us, and yet reach heaven in safety. On the matter of Christ's atoning death, as the way of peace, truth is only one. If we are wrong here, we are ruined forever.

*Savourer.* This formula means, well inclined to, well affected to. *The things that be of God, i. e.,* things heavenly, pure and divine, pleasing to God, as opposed to *those that be of men, i. e.,* such as man, in his fallen state, sets his affections upon. Suppose that the pretended successors of Peter inherit all the prerogatives he had, then, if they inherit his succession as the rock, how do they get rid of the succession, "Get thee behind me, Satan?" It will not

do to take Peter's mantle when he speaks truth and is praised, and to throw it away when he commits sin and states error. They must not take the kernel and cast away the shell, take the good and reject the bad. They must take the succession as a whole, or not at all. They must take Satan Peter as well as Rock Peter.

24. ¶ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. 26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. 28. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

† Chap. x. 38; Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23, iv. 27; Acts xv. 22; 1 Thes. iii. 3; 2 Tim. iii. 12. † Luke xvii. 33; John xii. 25. † Ps. xlix. 7, 8. † Chap. xxvi. 64; Mark viii. 38; Luke ix. 26. † Dan. vii. 10; Zech. xiv. 5, xxv. 31; Jude 14. † Job xxxiv. 11; Ps. lxxii. 12. Prov. xxiv. 12; Jer. xvii. 10, xxxii. 19; Rom. ii. 6; 1 Cor. iii. 8; 2 Cor. v. 10; 1 Peter i. 17; Rev. ii. 23, xxii. 12.

If any man, &c. Observe our Lord's terms of discipleship. An impostor would have made easy conditions, and promised a pleasant and prosperous career, to induce people to follow him, but Jesus pursued the opposite course. 1. *Deny himself.* We are to deny ourselves our earthly desires for ease, pleasure, riches, esteem, and to resist the most clamorous solicitations of our pride, ambition, avarice, and carnal self-love. The injunction does not solely or mainly refer to the renunciation of vice, which, of course, is to be renounced, but to the advantages of this life of which the followers of Christ must be prepared to suffer the loss with an undisturbed mind. 2. *Take up his cross.* (See on chap. x. 38.) 3. *And follow me,* that is, obey my commands and imitate my example. One of the ancients observes: "Because, after the cross, we require a new strength, He adds, 'and follow me.'" "And this," remarks another, "is because it may happen that a man may suffer, and yet not follow Christ, that is, when he does not suffer for Christ's sake."

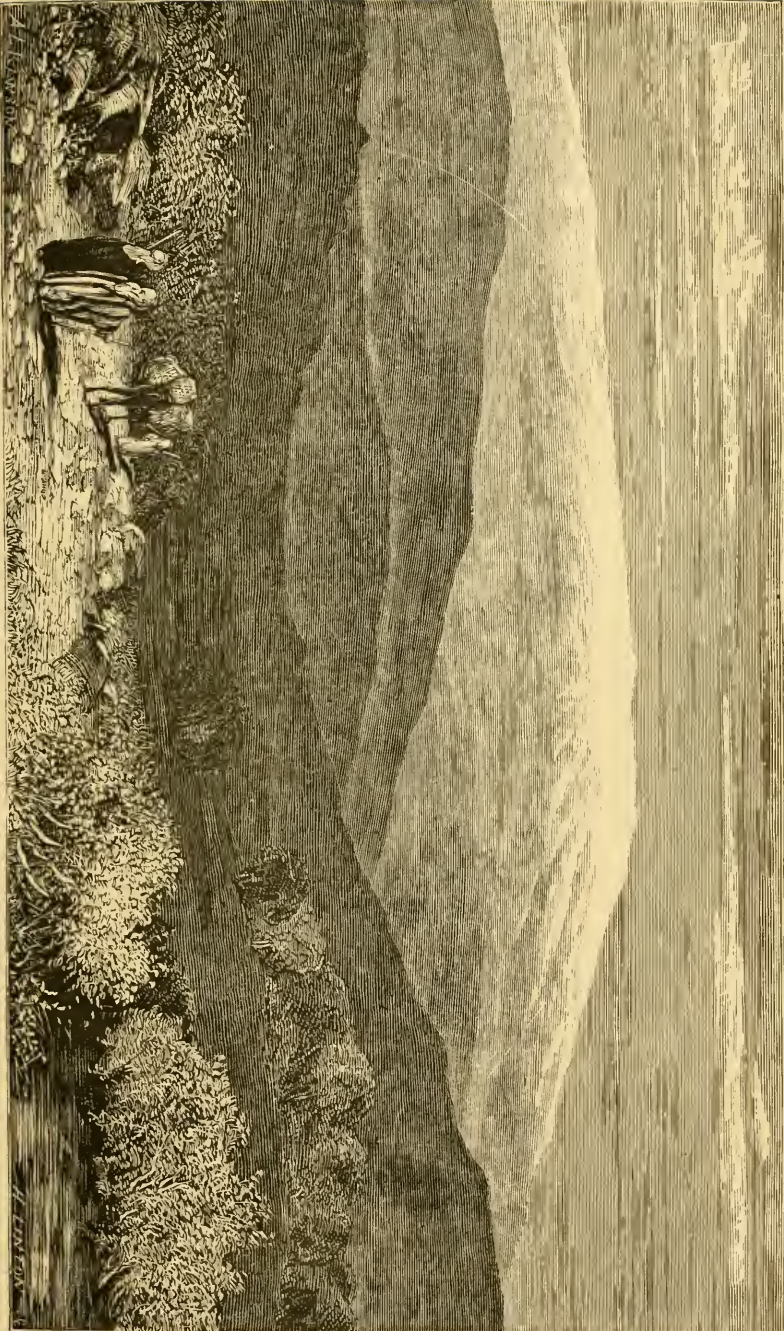
*Save his life, &c.* (See on Matt. x. 39; Mark viii. 35; Luke ix. 24.) This was a truth of infinitely deep significance for the first disciples of the Lord, who, for His sake, left all; yet not less significant is it for the history of the development of the Christian life of each one. (See on chap. x. 39.)

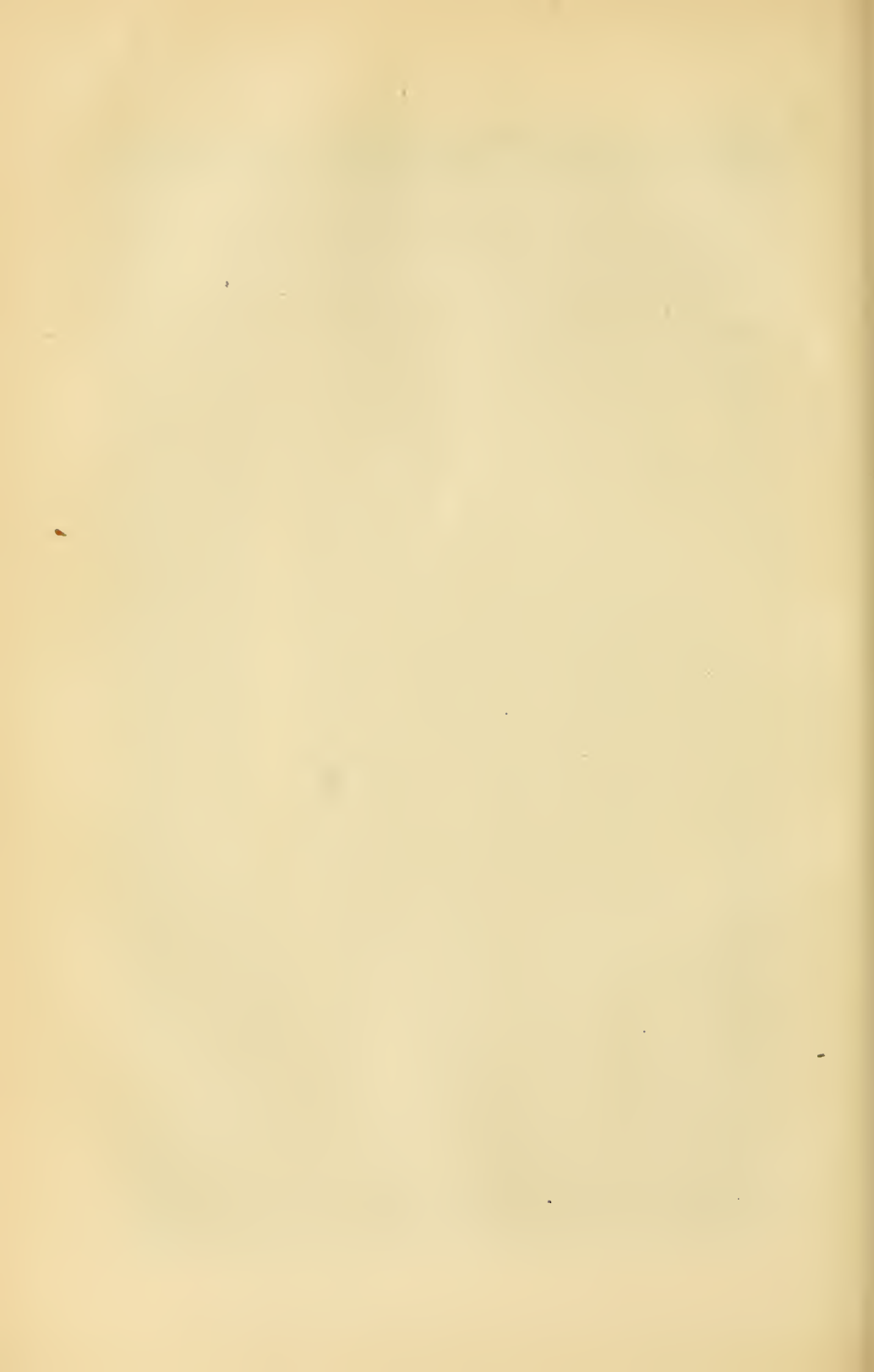
To lose the soul, is not to be annihilated. The very expression, "what is a man profited," &c., implies conscious existence beyond the grave. If a man could gain the whole world, he could not enjoy it. He could not even see it, except on a map. He would not be content with it. He would have no certainty of keeping it. It would afford him no consolation in death. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—to buy it back, as the price of its redemption. Probably the Saviour alludes to Ps. xlix. 8. The question teaches us that there is no redemption in hell. It will be observed that our Lord does not answer the question He proposes, but leaves it to press on our conscience with its own proper and mighty force.

"Truth is immortal as thy soul; and fable  
As fleeting as thy joys. Be wise, nor make  
Heaven's highest blessing, Vengeance; O, be wise!  
Nor make a curse of immortality.  
Say, know'st thou what it is, or what thou art?  
Know'st thou the importance of a soul immortal?  
Behold the midnight glory, worlds on worlds!  
Amazing pomp! Redouble this amaze,  
Ten thousand add, and twice ten thousand more,  
Then weigh the whole; one soul outweighs them all,  
And calls the astonishing magnificence  
Of unintelligent creation poor."

*The glory of his Father.* 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. (John v. 27.) According to his works, literally, working or work taken as a whole. This, at the last day, will constitute the criterion of judgment, as evincing the state of the heart. *The Son of man coming, &c.* The reference here is to that tremendous catastrophe, the destruction of Jerusalem, which was some forty years distant, or more, at which event the old Jewish economy passed away with a great noise, and extricated from that wreck and ruin, there emerged what it is not too much to call, a new earth and a new heaven, when the things shaken were removed, to the end that Christ's saints might receive a kingdom which could not be moved. To men of full age it was not a mere nugatory prediction that they should live to see this event, and these words of Jesus compel us to believe that, if only for one Apostle, yet for more than one of the disciples then standing there, it was fulfilled.

MOUNT HERMON.





1. How was Christ "tempted" by His enemies? 2. How did He answer them? 3. What caution did He give to His disciples? 4. How did He reprove them? 5. What did Christ ask His disciples? 6. Why did He ask this? 7. What was their reply? 8. Explain verse 17. 9. What did Jesus say about His Church? 10. How are we to understand verse 19? 11. When did Jesus show to His disciples that He must suffer? 12. How did Peter receive this? 13. What did our Lord reply? 14. What does He require of those who "will come after Him?" 15. What is said about the soul? 16. What about the Son of man coming in His glory?

## CHAPTER XVII.

1 *The transfiguration of Christ.* 14 *He healeth the tunatick,* 22 *forgetteth his own passion,* 24 *and payeth tribute.*

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.—Mark ix. 2: Luke ix. 28.

Jesus had announced to His disciples His sufferings, rejection and death (chap. xvi. 21), and they were greatly startled, surprised and dejected. He now vouchsafes to them a prophetic glimpse into the glory which should follow. *Peter, James and John* formed a company sufficient, so far as number is concerned, to bear testimony to the fact at the proper time. The law required no more than two or three witnesses to constitute a regular and judicial proof. (Deut. xix. 15).

*An high mountain.* Not Tabor, as is generally supposed, for a fortress, or town, existed on it from very early times, down to B. C. 50 or 53, and, as Josephus says that he strengthened the fortifications of a city there, about A. D. 60, it is morally certain that Tabor must have been inhabited during the intervening period, that is, the days of Christ. The order of the history determines the transfiguration to some mountain not far from *Cesarea Philippi*. Many magnificent events in the Divine dispensations have been transacted on mountains. (See Gen. xxii. 14; Ex. xix.; Deut. xxxiii. 2; 2 Chron. iii. 1; Matt. v. 1; xiv. 23; xxviii. 16.)

2. And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

The transfiguration was not a change of the substance of our Lord, for He remained afterward in the flesh, and had still to die. It was an intense beaming forth of the hidden glory of the only begotten, through the tabernacle in which He had enshrined it while He dwelt among us, so that it penetrated the pores of His very garments, and they became white, and glistening.

Never was scene more full of majesty. Never was description more full of grandeur and simplicity. His *face* was like the sun. What a contrast to that "visage more marred than men, and his form than the sons of men!" (Isa. lii. 14). His *raiment* was like the light—pure, bright. A glory was seen by others, as put on the face of Moses, but the glory of Jesus shone not upon Him from without but out of Him from within. He was in one blaze of glory. (Ps. civ. 2; Heb. iii. 4.) As was the glory of Christ on the Mount, so shall the bodies of the saints be in the resurrection. (Phil. iii. 21; Dan. xii. 3; Matt. xiii. 43; 1 Cor. xv. 43; Col. iii. 4; 1 Peter v. 1; Rev. iii. 4, 5.)

3. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

This reappearance of Moses and Elijah teaches us by a palpable fact, that death is not the end of being. It was, as it were, the cloud rolled away for a little, that we might see the gorgeous splendors that were behind it. The Apostles saw two persons who were once inhabitants of our world, clothed in bodily forms. Before them are Moses, who, fourteen hundred and eighty years before, had passed away, and who had no sooner tasted of death than probably his body was withdrawn from under the dominion of death (Deut. xxxiv. 6; Jude 9), and Elijah, who, though more than nine hundred years before translated (2 Kings ii. 2), so that he did not see death, now shows that the body may be transformed, and dwell in glory, too. Here we learn that the departed are not insensible, as some have said, till the resurrection morn (2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 21–3); also, that saints in heaven are known and distinguished from one another by the form and appearance of their glorified bodies, and, probably, addressed by the same name which they bore on earth. (Luke xvi. 24.)



In this varied group on the Mount, we have a representation of the Church in her diversified dispensations — Moses and Elijah, the representatives of Old Testament saints—Moses, the giver of the Law, Elijah, the chief of the Prophets, and Peter, James and John, the ministers of the New Testament, while in the midst stands Jesus, to whom the Law and the Prophets, and the Apostles, equally bear witness, and from whom the glory of all comes. (See Matt. vii. 12.) Here the unity of the Old and New Covenant is wonderfully attested, and not the unity only, but with this unity the subordination of the Old to the New, that Christ is “the end of the law” (Rom. x. 4.), and the object to which all prophecy pointed (Acts x. 43, xxviii. 23; Rom. iii. 21), that, therefore, the great purpose of these had now been fulfilled, all which was declared in the fact that, after their testimony thus given, Moses and Elias disappear, whilst Christ only remains.

4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

It will be noticed that the Apostles did not pray to Moses and Elias, but to Christ alone. If ever there was an occasion when saints might be prayed to, this was it, for here the saints were not to be guessed to be hearing, but were seen to be within both hearing and seeing. But the disciples prayed only to Jesus, thus showing that we may not worship and pray to saints, because Christ is all in all.

*Good for us to be here.* Two things caused Peter's bliss: 1. The communion of Saints. Here were not only John and James, but Moses and Elias. 2. The presence of Jesus. Truly it is a good thing ever to be found in the company of the Saviour. With Him we are safe, and nowhere else. He is the source of all delight and knowledge, the fountain of honor and excellency, the consolation of Israel, all in all. *Three tabernacles, &c.*, three tents, booths or camps. He does not say palaces, although he would have held palaces, whether of cedar, marble, or solid gold, none too good for such residents. But the rugged and woody sides of the mountain afforded no implements for the building of such

structures, and he proposes tabernacles. In making this request, Peter forgets that the full fruition of the heavenly blessedness, of which he is now receiving a taste, is for another world. Had his request been granted, how could our Saviour have suffered and died? Still it showed affection. None will be *with the Lord forever*, but those who find it their happiness for the Lord to be *with them now*.

5. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.  
 12 Peter i. 17. chap. iii. 17; Mark i. 11; Luke iii. 22.  
 13 Isa. xliiii. 1. 14 Deut. xviii. 15, 19. Acts iii. 22, 23.

*While he (Peter) yet spake.* Let us not fail to notice the difference between the manifestation *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. (Ex. xix. 16.) On *this* mountain, the cloud was bright, the whole scene was luminous and transporting, and nothing was heard but the mild, paternal voice of the Almighty. *Overshadowed them.* Light, in its utmost intensity, hides as effectually as the darkness would do. A cloud is the constant accompaniment of the Divine Presence. (Ex. xiv. 19; xix. 16; xxxiii. 9; xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10; Ps. civ. 3; Isa. xix. 1; Dan. vii. 13.)

*A voice out of the cloud.* This shows that the disciples were not enveloped in the cloud. The same voice which was heard before on the Jordan, consecrating Christ as King of the kingdom of heaven, and afterward (John xix. 28) as the High Priest of the New Testament. (2 Peter i. 17.) *My beloved Son, &c.* This is an echo of an utterance of Moses. (Deut. xviii. 15; comp. Ps. ii. 7; Isa. xlii. 1; see notes on chap. iii. 17; see 2 Peter i. 17; Ps. ii. 6, xlv. 2; Heb. i. 8, ix. 14; 1 John iii. 5.) Here is the end of all Scripture revelation, to testify of Jesus. The only way in which God the Father deals with sinful man, is by pointing them to His Son. From the great cloud of heavenly witnesses—patriarchs, prophets, Apostles, and believers in every age, it is still the same voice—Christ, God's beloved, and the sinner beloved for Christ's sake, accepted in the Beloved, justified, sanctified, preserved, glorified through Him.

Hear ye him. Christ the *Son* was far greater than Moses and Elias, who were but *servants*, hence they were to hear *Him*. 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 term imports, to hearken to One only. (Col. ii. 17; Heb. i. 1-4, ii. 1-3, viii. 5, x. 1.) Religion which terminates not in action is delusion. If we have been taught of the Lord, we will hear Christ. His voice will be a sweet voice to us, for it will be "the voice of our beloved." When He speaks in mercy, we will hear with gladness; with authority, we will hear with submission; with reproof, we will hear with contrition; in wrath, we will hear with fear.

6. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.—<sup>2</sup> Peter i. 18.

Fell upon their face, through fear, and perhaps as an act of reverential prostration in the presence of the Deity. *And were sore afraid*. It was an universally prevalent opinion with the ancient Jews that no one could see God and live. (See Ex. xx. 19; Judg. xiii. 22; Isa. vi. 5.)

7. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.—Dan. viii. 18, ix. 19, x. 18.

So the same Saviour touched John in the Apocalypse. (Chap. i. 17.) He "laid His right hand upon him, saying unto him, Fear not." (See Jer. i. 9; Ezek. ii. 2; Isa. vi. 7.)

8. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

When they had received strength and confidence from the touch of Jesus to rise up, 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. Jesus alone is to us instead of the law, the sacrifices and the prophets. Our true happiness consists in looking upon Him alone as our law and pattern, in following Him alone as our Moses in the desert of this world, and in desiring His Spirit alone instead of that of Elias. Let us seek to see "Jesus only," in our sense of sin, our trials, and in our dying hour.

9. And as they came down from the mountain, <sup>b</sup>Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until <sup>c</sup>the Son of man be risen again from the dead. <sup>a</sup>Chap. xvi. 29; Mark viii. 30 and ix. 9.

*Charged them.* (See on chap. xvi. 20.)

There were probably two reasons for giving this charge. 1. The disciples were not competent to preach the Messiah as *He is* until they had beheld all the scenes of His death and resurrection, and been empowered by the Spirit from on high. 2. The people were not yet sufficiently informed respecting the true nature of the Messiah's reign, to be told of what had taken place. They would probably have made a wrong use of it, regarding it as a signal that the Messiah's glorious earthly reign had commenced, and therefore holding themselves in readiness to engage in civil disturbances. It is always the safest way not to divulge or publish extraordinary favors and graces; they are a treasure which ought to be carefully hid, for fear lest vanity should rob us of it.

*Vision*, or sight. The word does not intimate that it was not a reality. *Until the Son of man be risen*, &c. From Mark ix. 10, it appears that the disciples did not know exactly how to understand what Jesus said respecting "rising from the dead." Like the Jews, in general, they were laboring under much ignorance and misapprehension respecting the Messiah; but Jesus was gradually preparing them for what was to take place.

10. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes, that Elias must first come? <sup>a</sup>Mal. iv. 5; chap. xi. 14; Mark ix. 2.

Elijah had now appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, and was already departed. The disciples, in a state of perplexity, therefore inquired how this was to be reconciled with the prevailing interpretation of Malachi's prophecy.

11. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things: 12. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but <sup>b</sup>have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. <sup>a</sup>Mal. iv. 6; Luke i. 16, 17; Acts iii. 21. <sup>1</sup>Chap. xi. 14; Mark ix. 12, 13. <sup>2</sup>Chap. xiv. 3, 10. <sup>3</sup>Chap. xvi. 21. <sup>c</sup>Chap. xi. 14.

Our Lord recognized the prophecy of Malachi as calling for the coming of Elijah, to *restore all things*, *i. e.*, to bring the things of the kingdom from their confusion to a state of restored order before Messiah came, but He affirmed that this prophecy had already been fulfilled, for Elias had already come, but the Jews did not receive or recognize him; their minds were se

blinded and perverted by prejudice, that they did not discern his true office or mission; on the contrary, they had done unto him whatsoever they had chosen or desired, *i. e.*, they had persecuted and put him to death. (xiv. 10.)

Jesus also added that the treatment of the Forerunner was a clear indication of what they would do to Himself. This statement of our Lord, falling in, as it did, with their remembrance of the Baptist's attire, and other particulars which clearly pointed him out to the eye of faith as the promised Elijah, as well as our Lord's own express assertion on a former occasion (chap. xi. 10, 14), left no doubt on the minds of the disciples to whom He referred. The Spirit of prophecy, by the lips of Malachi, simply designated John by the name of the prophet of whom he was the antitype, just as Christ is called our *passover* by the appropriation to Him of the name which belongs to his type. (See on chap. xi. 10, 14.)

14. ¶ AND when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a *certain* man kneeling down to him, and saying, 15. Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. 16. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. ¶ Mark ix. 14; Luke ix. 37.

How unlike was this scene of sin and sorrow 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 glory. Angels beheld the same painful contrast, for, as they gaze upon the glory of God, they also watch over the sorrows of men. *A certain man kneeling down to him, or, falling at His knees.* The ancients consecrated the EAR to *memory*, the FOREHEAD to *genius*, the RIGHT HAND to *faith*, and the KNEES to *mercy*; hence those who entreated favor *fell at and touched the knees* of him whose kindness they supplicated.

*Lord, have mercy on my son, &c.* The appeal of the distressed parent to Jesus is peculiarly tender and touching. His child 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. He was also dumb and deaf (Mark ix. 17), and possessed by an evil spirit. When this spirit took him in its might, then, in the paroxysms of his disorder, he *suddenly cried out* (Luke

ix. 39), (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 *tore* him till he foamed and gnashed with his teeth, and *bruised* him, reluctantly leaving him, so that altogether he pined away like one the very springs of whose life were dried up. (See Mark ix. 18; Luke ix. 39.) 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.

17. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him to me. 18. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

Our Lord's rebuke was designed, not for the father of the lad, but mainly 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. (See verse 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 him hither to me.* As the staff in Gehazi's hand could not arouse the dead child, but the prophet himself must come and take the work in hand, before ever a cure can be wrought, so must it be now. When the young begin to turn to the Saviour, and first cry for His help, this wretched spirit would rather they should die than be delivered from his power, but the eye of Jesus is on all who truly seek Him, and though He may permit Satan to alarm and distress them, He will at length rescue them from his tyranny.

*And the child was cured, &c.* What encouragement have parents, teachers and ministers to go on praying for young men, even at their worst! Hard as their hearts may seem now, they may yet be softened. Desperate as their wickedness now appears,

they may yet be healed. They may yet repent and be converted, and their last state prove better than their first. Who can tell? Let it be a settled principle in us, when we read our Lord's miracles, never to despair of the conversion of any soul.

19. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20. And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you *if ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.* 21. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Chap. xxi. 21; Mark xi. 23; Luke xvii. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 9 and xiii. 2.

*Why could not we, &c.* They were mortified and distressed at their failure, and therefore took the first opportunity to inquire from what it arose. When the ministers of the Gospel find their labors with respect to some places or persons ineffectual, they should come by *private prayer* to Christ, humble themselves before Him, and beg to learn whether some evil *in themselves* has not been the cause of the unfruitfulness of their efforts. *Because of your unbelief.* The scribes had been disputing with the disciples during the absence of their Master. (Mark ix. 14.) It is likely that they disputed in reference to Jesus, and to the power of working miracles, and by casting suspicions and surmises, and suggesting doubts, they had produced a distrustful state of mind in the disciples. One who believes the truth may have his mind shaken for a time by hearkening to objections, especially if skillfully and slyly presented.

*If ye have faith, &c.* The faith of miracles is here meant. To *remove a mountain* was a form of expression often employed at that time to denote the performance of a thing so great as to be apparently impossible. Our Lord used the word *mountain*, as He did also the *mustard-seed*, figuratively, to show the disciples, who had a full commission, among other things, to cast out devils without exception, what they could have done even with this more than ordinarily malicious and inveterate devil, if they had not distrusted the power they had received. The general teaching of the verse is, that as unbelief is the secret of all weakness, so is faith the secret of all strength, and that the least spiritual power shall be patent for the overthrow of the

mightiest powers which are merely of this world.

*This kind, &c.* It is here evident that there are orders of evil spirits; that as there is a hierarchy of heaven, so there is an inverted hierarchy of hell. The same is intimated in chap. xii. 45, and Eph. vi. 12. There is probably a climax, the Apostle rising from one degree of spiritual power and malignity to another. *Goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.* Though nothing is impossible to faith, yet such a height of faith as is requisite for such triumphs, is not to be reached in a moment or without effort—either with God, in prayer, or with ourselves, in self-denying exercises. (See 1 Cor. ix. 27.) Faith is kept vigorous by much prayer, and by such abstinence from food as fits the mind for the highest exercises of religion, and leaves it free to hold communion with God. "We must," says an old divine, "set an edge upon our faith by prayer, and upon our prayer by fasting."

22. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: 23. And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Chap. xvi. 21, and xx. 17; Mark viii. 31, ix. 30, 31, and x. 33; Luke ix. 22, 44, xviii. 31 and xxiv. 67.

*Into the hands of men.* He who came to redeem sinful men, was delivered up to men who should be his murderers! *Kill him, &c.* (See on chap. xii. 40; xvi. 21.) This is our Lord's prophetic allusion to His future passion, death and resurrection, which the angels referred to in addressing the women who visited the sepulchre. (Luke xxiv. 6.) It will be observed, that on *this* occasion neither Simon Peter nor any of the rest "began to rebuke him." (Chap. xvi. 22.) It is simply added. *And they were exceeding sorry.* They loved not less than they revered their Lord, and the bare idea that He might possibly be exposed to ignominy, maltreatment and suffering, filled their hearts with sorrow.

24. ¶ And when they were come to Capernaum, they said that received tribute-money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?

*They that received, &c.* The receivers or collectors of the *didrachma*. The *didrachma* or double drachma was a silver coin, of the value of two Attic drachmas, as its name imports, or a Jewish half-shekel, equal to about 30 cents of our money.

This tribute or tax was required or expected from every male Israelite above the age of twenty, and was to be paid into the corban, or treasury of God, for the current expenses of the temple service. (See Ex. xxx. 13, 14. 2 Chron. xxiv. 6, 9.)

25. He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? 26. Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

From this prompt reply of Peter, it is evident that our Lord customarily paid all taxes, tributes, &c., which were common among the people wherever He came. The children of God are subject to all civil laws in the places where they live—and should pay the taxes levied on them by public authority. (Rom. xiii. 7.) *Prevented him, i. e.*, anticipated him. This anticipation implies a miraculous knowledge of Peter's *assent*, inasmuch as our Lord was not present, when the question was asked and the answer given.

*What thinkest thou, Simon?* As Peter, through his hasty imprudence, had pledged our Lord to the paying of the didrachma, which now He could scarcely recede from, this question was put to him by Christ, to bring him, with the other disciples, to the true recognition of Himself, from which they had in part fallen. "On what principle hast thou been promising this for Me? is not all the analogy of things earthly against it?" *Of whom do the kings, &c.* Our Lord *now* is speaking of the poll-tax, payable to the Romans by every one whose name was in the "Census." This was a *civil* tax. By *children*, in the question, we are to understand, the members of the families of the kings referred to, and by *strangers*, their subjects. *Of strangers*—and these only. *Then are the children free.* The reasoning is this: Earthly kings exempt their own children from paying tribute, but this being levied in the name of God, and for His house and service, I, who am His Son, and superior to the temple, may well be exempted. (See Ex. xxx. 12; Heb. i. 2, iii. 6; Matt. xii. 6.)

27. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give it unto them for me and thee.

*A piece of money*—a stater. Observe, 1.

Christ's unwillingness that offense should be given. There are matters in which Christ's people should sink their own opinions, and submit to requirements which they may not thoroughly approve, rather than give offense and "hinder the Gospel of Christ." We ought not to be sternly tenacious, unless some principle of truth and duty is involved. 2. Christ's penury—so poor that He did not possess wherewith to pay the temple tribute. He could have enriched His disciples with all the pearls in the ocean, but He knew riches would be a snare to them, and He had better treasure to give, which was laid up for them in heaven. 3. Christ's omniscience. He pierced the waters of the sea, discerned a particular fish, saw what was in its body, and announced a piece of money there, and the very *name* of the coin. (See Jonah i. 17; 1 Kings xiii. 24, xx. 36; Amos ix. 3.) So does He see what money we are in possession of, how we acquired it, and the way in which we are using it. 4. Christ's power and dominion. He is Lord of all. From the millions of fish in the sea, He brought the fish He knew had swallowed a piece of silver, to Peter's hook. "All things are put under him . . . . the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." 5. Christ's sanction to the use of means. Peter could not replenish the fish with the money, or make it to swim in the direction of his bait; but he could procure the bait, throw in the hook, and in the most likely place, and stand, and watch. So in spiritual things, there is always something which we cannot do, and something which we can do. The Apostle points to these, and writes them, where he says: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." 6. Peter's implicit obedience. He did not reason, or murmur, but obeyed. So should we use all the means God has prescribed, relying on His promise, and we shall not be disappointed. 7. The identification of Christ with His people. He said to Peter, "give unto them for me and thee." Jesus regards His true followers as one with Himself. (John xxv. 17.)

1. Who accompanied Jesus to the mountain? 2. What mountain was it? 3. Describe the transfiguration? 4. Who appeared on the mountain? 5. What were they doing? 6. What does their appearing teach? 7. What did Peter say? 8. What is said about "a bright cloud?" 9. What did the voice out of it say? 10. What was the effect of this on the disciples? 11. What did they ask? 12. Who came to Jesus? 13. Why did he come? 14. What was the result? 15. How did Christ foretell His sufferings? 16. What was tribute-money? 17. How did Jesus pay tribute-money? 18. Why did He do it? 19. What does His example teach?

## CHAPTER XVIII.

1 *Christ warneth his disciples to be humble and harmless: 7 to avoid offences, and not to despise the little ones: 15 teacheth how we are to deal with our brethren, when they offend us: 21 and how oft to forgive them: 23 which he setteth forth by a parable of the king, that took account of his servants, 32 and punished him, who shewed no mercy to his fellow.*

AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?—Mark ix. 33: Luke ix. 46, xxii. 24.

The disciples, after they had disputed by the way, and had been set right by our Lord, were at first silent; but when they had all been called together by the Saviour, some, again, finally proposed the question to Him of their relative greatness. 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.

2. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them;

The method of instruction by emblems and symbolical actions has always been prevalent in the East. A little boy that happened to be playing near, furnished an appropriate and expressive symbol of the great lesson which Jesus would now inculcate upon His disciples, as they were gathered around Him. Important as little children are, as flowers planted along the path of life, to relieve its gloom and ruggedness, there is still a higher purpose which they subserve—they are, as it were, truth in a living form, made to move around us for the most important of all tuitions. (Mark x. 15; 1 Peter ii. 2; Ps. cxxxii. 2.)

3. And said, Verily I say unto you, <sup>b</sup>Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.  
<sup>b</sup>Ps. cxxxii. 2; chap. xix. 14; Mark x. 14; Luke xviii. 16; 1 Cor. xiv. 20; 1 Peter ii. 2.

*Be converted*—turned from this worldly, aspiring disposition. Converts still have remains of corruption, some lust often breaking forth, which they must take special care to resist and subdue. The disciples had left all and followed Jesus, yet they needed to be more and more turned: and thus should we ever be putting off the old man, and putting on the new man more and more. *Become as little children*—abandon your thirst for power and pre-eminence, and learn to think of these things as a little child thinks of them. (See on verse 4; and Luke xviii. 17.) *Ye shall not enter, &c.*—ye shall not be regarded as belonging to the Messiah's kingdom.

4. <sup>c</sup>Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.—Chap. xx. 27, and xxiii. 11.

The point of comparison here is formed, not by the receptivity, the striving after perfection, the absence of pretension in the child, but by its humility, which was so sadly lacking in the disciples. By this humility the child's understanding was yet free from vain imagination, its heart from rivalry and ambition, its will from stubbornness. *The same is greatest, &c.*, that is, he will reach the highest seat of happiness and glory. True humility is the ground on which the blessings and rewards of the Divine kingdom will be distributed. (James iv. 6, 10; Isa. lvii. 15.)

5. And <sup>d</sup>whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.—<sup>d</sup>Chap. x. 42; Luke ix. 48.

*Shall receive, i. e.*, approve, love, treat with kindness, aid in the time of need. *One such little child*. Not the actual child, but the spiritual child, whom grace has made. *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.

6. \*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.  
\*Mark ix. 42; Luke xvii. 1, 2.

The word rendered *offend* signifies *cause to stumble*. It is used both for those who fall and perish, and for those who fall and rise again. *One of these little ones*, &c., meaning, Christians in general, namely, those of ordinary capacity and attainments, honest, humble, and sincere, though not highly-gifted believers. (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. Advanced Christians must refrain even from enjoying *lawful* privileges, sooner than endanger their weak brethren. (See Rom. xiv.) If it be a grievous sin to wound a weak believer through *carelessness*, how dreadful a crime it must be to injure him *wilfully*! *It were better*, &c. This was a common punishment in ancient times. It was frequently resorted to in the case of rebels, and other malefactors, in the times of the later emperors of Rome, and was inflicted on many of the first Christians. The signification of the imagery is not only a simple drowning, but at the same time a sinking into the deepest abyss of hell. Nothing but sincere repentance can prevent the infliction of this terrible punishment on those thus guilty.

7. †Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!  
†Luke xvii. 1; 1 Cor. xi. 19. ‡Chap. xxvi. 24.

WOE UNTO THE WORLD, &c. Some understand by this, that a woe is pronounced upon the world, or the inhabitants of the earth, on account of the obstructions it lays in the way of the spread of the kingdom of God, either by its persecutions or corrupting influences. Others take the word *woe* rather as an exclamation of pity, in view of the offenses which the world receives from false members of the Church, and its natural and strong inclination to stumble over such offenses. (See 2 Sam.

xii. 14; Rom. ii. 24; 1 Cor. x. 32.) *Offenses*, stumbling-blocks. *It must needs be*, &c. Of course the Saviour speaks not of an absolute, but of a relative necessity, proceeding from the sinful state of the world. *Woe to that man*, &c., that is, curse or condemnation on him; he is performing the devil's work, and must reap the devil's reward. The two facts of *Divine prescience* and *human responsibility*, which are here stated, all philosophy is bound to accept as verities, whatever difficulty may attend every effort that is made logically to reconcile them. As it consists with Divine goodness to create free agents, so, consequently, to permit offenses, and the justice of God in punishing them cannot reasonably be questioned, because He is no farther concerned than in the creation of the powers He bestows; the agents themselves only are chargeable with the abuse of them, the *necessity* under which offences lie being only voluntary and moral. There is no necessary connection between liberty and sin: the one, indeed, is the gift of God, the other, the free act of man.

8. †Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. ‡And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.—†Chap. v. 29, 30; Mark ix. 43, 45.

Our Lord here lays down the principle that the best way to avoid the sin and condemnation of being stumbling-blocks to others, is to remove every cause of offense in one's self. The *eye* is the chief avenue by which sin enters, the *hand* is the symbol of action, whether in the way of speech, or manual operation, and the *foot* may be regarded as symbolizing the walk of life—a man's ways. (See on chap. v. 29, 30.) The only difference between the words there and here is, that there they refer to impure inclinations; here, to an ambitious disposition, an irascible or quarrelsome temper, and the like: and the injunction is, to perform spiritual amputation, to strike at the root of such dispositions and cut off the occasions of them. *Halt*—lame. *Maimed*—mutilated, as by a hand cut off. This does not mean that the glorified bodies of those in heaven will be mutilated or deficient in any of their members, but that it is better to go to heaven *without* any

such enjoyments, however dear, as are a snare, than to have them here, and perish at last. (Luke xvi. 25; Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. ix. 26.) *Everlasting fire. . . . Hell fire.* It is worse than vain, it is a wicked and miserable deceit, to seek to elude the plain teaching of Scripture here, and in so many other places (see Isa. lxvi. 24; Matt. iii. 12, xxv. 41, 46; Rev. xiv. 11, xx. 10), concerning the eternity of future punishment. Men who deny this doctrine, only repeat the devil's old argument, that we "shall not surely die." (Gen. iii. 4.) The word translated *everlasting*, is used in the great majority of instances in the New Testament, of God, of the unseen and future world, of the perpetuity of Christ's kingdom (2 Peter i. 11), of the happiness of the saints in heaven, and of eternal life. Why, then, attempt to limit its import in reference to the perdition of the ungodly? Universalists instead of preaching down hell, would do much better if they would preach up Christ and heaven.

10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>1</sup>Ps. xxxiv. 7; Zech. xiii. 7; Heb. i. 14. <sup>2</sup>Esth. i. 14; Luke i. 19.

Our Lord, resuming the train of instruction, which had been partially interrupted by verses 7-9, proceeds to show more at large the temper of mind which should be cherished toward His disciples, and mentions some reasons why they should be treated with much affection. *Take heed—beware. Despise not—*treat not with disrespect and scorn, as though they were mean, silly, and contemptible. (Rom. xiv. 1, 3, 10; 1 Cor. viii. 9.) *One of these little ones.* Those whom my grace has made to be as "little children." (Ver. 6.) For . . . *their angels.* (See on iv. 6.) This is the first consideration enforcing a benevolent regard for Christians. *Their—*the angels are theirs—ministering spirits to them, and always intent to execute the orders of the Heavenly King. *Do always behold, &c.* According to Oriental custom, monarchs are sequestered from the public view, and none are admitted to see them, but such as are in especial favor. (Ex. xxxiii. 20; Num. vi. 25, 26; 1 Kings x. 8; 2 Kings xxv. 19; Esth. i. 14; Prov. xxii. 19; Dan. i. 5; Luke xxi. 36.) These

angels, when not sent from heaven to other parts of the universe to do God's will and pleasure, continually gaze upon His countenance, being, like Himself, tenderly concerned for the little ones intrusted to their care. (Ps. cxiii. 5, 6.)

From this passage, and several others, some have inferred that every individual Christian has a guardian angel. In the Old Testament we only read of guardian angels of empires. (Dan. x. 13, 20.) But at a later period the Jews believed also in the existence of guardian angels for individuals. This was also true under the New Testament. (Acts xii. 15.) If this doctrine is not here admitted by Christ, it is at least not disturbed. It has prevailed more or less in every age of the Church. The ministry of angels, which is founded in the mediation of Christ, is a truth most useful to be kept in mind, both by the Church and by the world, in order both to assure the hearts of God's people in the hour of tribulation, and to awe the world into deference and respect for "them who shall be heirs of salvation."

11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.—<sup>1</sup>Luke ix. 36, and xix. 10; John iii. 17, and xii. 47.

Here is another reason for cherishing a very kind regard for the disciples, even for the humblest of them—the inestimable price paid for their salvation. Man is *lost* to himself, for he is neither wise nor happy; to others, to whom he is not useful; to God, whom he does not glorify; to earth, which he does not enjoy; to heaven, which he is not in the way to attain; lost in his body, which is passing through infirmity, affliction and pain, to death and corruption; in his soul, which is going through ignorance and folly, sin and guilt, depravity and misery, to endless perdition. Yet He who is the *Son of God*, His Word, who created all things and upholds them by His power, who is God, Jehovah (Heb. i. 8), was made the *Son of man*, left His state of glory and assumed our nature to suffer and die in our stead. (See John i. 14, iii. 16; Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iv. 4; Phil. ii. 6, 7; Heb. ii. 14, x. 5-9; 1 John iv. 9, 10.)

12. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? 13. And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.—<sup>1</sup>Luke xv. 4.



The fact that Jesus, having rescued and restored His disciples from their former sinful and dangerous condition, feels a very peculiar interest in them, is here assigned, by way of argument and illustration, as the third reason why the most lowly member of His family is to be regarded with love and respect. Some construct, and we think justly, the words *into the mountains*, with the preceding clause in the sense, *doth he not leave the ninety and nine in (or upon) the mountains*. The mountains were grassy and well adapted for the pasturing of sheep. This parable is given more fully, though in a different context, in Luke xv. 4-6, on which see notes.

*Doth he not leave the ninety and nine, &c.* Dr. Chalmers understood this parable to involve this idea: There are thousands of worlds beside our own. They are inhabited. Our world, so far as we know, is the only fallen one. Jesus left the ninety and nine orbs that needed no salvation, because guilty of no sin, and came after this wandering world, that needs to be recovered.

*Seeketh that which is gone astray.* As the specific effort of the shepherd had respect not to the flock that remained on the pasture, but to the one sheep that had gone astray, the specific effort of the Son of God, in His incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection, has respect, not to the worthy, but the unworthy. *Rejoiceth more of that sheep, &c.* It is natural that there should be more joy for a small portion, which has been endangered, than for the continued secure possession of a much larger portion. So the mother rejoices at her sick child's recovery more than at the uninterrupted health of all the others; and the father rejoices more at the return of his sailor boy from the perils of the sea, than at the undisturbed security of all his other children who had continued under his roof. In such cases, the disproportionate joy arises from the unexpectedness of the result, from the temporary uncertainty concerning it; but as nothing of this kind could find place with God, who knows the end from the beginning, and in whom earnest love for one of His ransomed people need not throw into the background, even for the moment, love and care for the others, of course the

analogy is not to be pressed so far in relation to Him. Still, we are taught to believe that God rejoices to see the prodigal return. (Luke xv. 20, &c.) "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy."

14. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

It is significant that it is said here, "*your Father,*" not as in verse 10, "*my Father.*" This phraseology implies the injunction that the disciples, as the children of God, should be like their Heavenly Father in tenderly caring for the little ones. The weaker a man is, the greater care we ought to have of his salvation, as God teaches us by His own example. We are to use all diligence in seeking to recover to the way of righteousness those that have formerly appeared to walk therein. (See Eph. iv. 32; Heb. xii. 12, 13.)

15. ¶ Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

<sup>a</sup>Lev. xix. 17; Luke xvii. 3. <sup>b</sup>James v. 20; 1 Peter iii. 1.

The cautions respecting the high regard which we ought to cherish toward the disciples of Christ, were followed by directions how to regulate our conduct, if a Christian brother should do us wrong. *Go and tell him his fault.* Do not wait till he come to thee, but go at once to him in the zeal of love and meekness of spirit, and try to convince him in this spirit of the wrong he has done. He may have injured you unintentionally. (Gen xxi. 26.) His conduct may admit of explanation. (Josh. xxii. 24.) At any rate, this friendly, faithful, straightforward way of dealing is the most likely to secure the desired result. (Lev. xix. 17; Ps. cxii. 5; Prov. xxv. 15; Gal. vi. 1.)

*Between thee and him alone*—so that there will be no motive of pride to induce him to make out a good case before a witness. Do not break forth upon him in the presence of the unbelieving, but take him aside. Do not blazon his offense abroad. It can do no good. It does injury. It is what the enemies of religion wish. To tell a man his faults by himself, requires courage, and makes on him the impression of sympathy and love; but to speak of them in his absence, argues want of love, and cowardice.

If he shall hear thee, *i. e.*, hear so as to yield to thy representations, and return to his duty, as becometh a follower of Christ. *Thou hast gained thy brother.* "By which it is made plain," says an ancient writer, "that enmities are a loss to both sides: for Christ saith not 'Thy brother hath saved himself,' but 'Thou hast gained thy brother,' which shows that both of you had suffered loss by your disagreement." (Prov. xi. 30, xv. 1, 2, 4; 1 Cor. vii. 16, ix. 19-22; 1 Peter iii. 1; James v. 19, 20.)

16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.  
†Dent. xvii. 6, and xix. 15; John viii. 17; 2 Cor. xiii. 1; Heb. x. 28.

*Not hear thee.* If he declines listening to your expostulations and reproof, whether from unwillingness to admit that the alleged offense is an offense at all, or a determination not to give it up because he loves it. *Then take with thee one or two more.* If the private interview fail, take one or two of the brethren to witness how just your complaint is, and how brotherly your spirit in dealing with him. *That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word, &c.* Rather "*the whole matter* may be established." A rule similar in its import was binding on the Jews. (Dent. xix. 15.) If the difficulty was harmoniously adjusted, no publicity was to be given to the affair. (See John viii. 17; 2 Cor. xiii. 1; Heb. x. 28; 1 Tim. v. 19.)

17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.  
†Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. v. 9; 2 Thes. iii. 6, 14; 2 John 10.

*Neglect to hear them.* From this it is evident that the witnesses present were to assist in bringing the offender to a sense of duty. The word rendered *shall neglect* here, is a much stronger expression than that employed in verse 16, having the additional idea of willful obstinacy. *Tell it unto the church,* bring him before the church or congregation to which both belong. (Acts vi. 1-3; 1 Cor. vi. 1-4; Acts xiii. 1-3.) Who can tell but the heart which has been unmoved by private remonstrances, may be moved by the fear of public exposure?

*But if he neglect to hear the church, i. e.,* if he disregards the admonitions, counsels and discipline of the church. The term is stronger than "not hearing," implying

something of contumacy. *Let him be unto thee, &c.* Regard him no longer as a brother Christian, but as one "without"—as the Jews did Gentiles and publicans. Do not hate him (chap. v. 44-8), but treat him as you do other men not connected with the church, until he repents, and renders himself, by God's grace, worthy of being received again into Christian fellowship. (Comp. Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. v. 11, 13; 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7; 2 Thes. iii. 6, 14; 2 Tim. ii. 21; Titus iii. 10; 2 John 10.)

This passage shows that every congregation has the power of excluding disobedient and refractory members from participation in its ordinances. Church discipline is according to the mind of Christ, and when wisely exercised, is calculated to promote a church's well being.

18. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.  
†Chap. xvi. 19; John xx. 23; 1 Cor. v. 4.

The constituted court of Christ's Church has authority to pronounce upon all such cases, and their decisions, on Scriptural grounds, shall have sanction from above. This authority He has given to the Church in order to secure her purity and peace, and if she proceeds in the performance of these duties in the temper and process prescribed by Him as the great Head of the Church, she but executes His laws, and she will be sustained by God Himself. While this promise was primarily addressed to the Apostles, who, in the administration of discipline, could not err, because they acted under the immediate guidance of the Spirit, it cannot be doubted, that it, as well as the formula of discipline in verses 15-17, was given to the Church through all time. As these words, which only a short time before were spoken to Peter (xvi. 16), are here addressed to all the Twelve, it is evident that they meant nothing peculiar to Peter, far less to his pretended successors at Rome.

19. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.—Chap. v. 24. †John iii. 22 and v. 14.

Our Lord thus assured the Apostles, who, in their important relation to the Church, would need special direction from heaven, that it was not necessary that the whole company should always be together in order to consult and pray; if only two

should unite in seeking a knowledge of the Divine will, their prayer would be heard, and whatsoever they should ask for, as connected with their official capacity, they should receive it. We are to regard this also as a general promise encouraging social prayer. *Two*, or more of *you*, or of any of my disciples, for instance husband and wife, *shall agree*, literally be *symphonious*, referring primarily to musical harmony. There must be prayer in living and loving union—by kindred spirits, members of one family, servants of one Lord, constrained by the same love, fighting under one banner, cheered by assurances of the same victory. The harmony of two hearts in prayer indicates that the same Spirit is in both. This union in prayer is the innermost and highest unity of the people of God. The *on earth* corresponds to the *my Father which is in heaven*. *Touching any thing*, &c. There must be, not an agreement merely to pray in concert, but to *pray for some definite thing*.—And in praying to our Heavenly Father, whose heart is full of tenderness, we must remember that He has all knowledge, and that His promise does not have respect to any improper fancies of men, but to petitions conformed to what He sees is right and suitable. That the promise has no reference to any selfish prayer, which two or more may unite in offering, is self-evident. (Mark x. 35. *It shall be done for them*. If the prayer is presented in faith, and the thing asked for is conducive to our good and to the glory of God, we may be sure of a favorable answer. The fewness of the petitioners shall be no bar to the proper answer from God. Not for nothing (as appears from the following verse) does Jesus say, *of my Father, not your Father*. (See John ix. 31; Matt. vii. 11; Luke xviii. 1; James iv. 3.)

20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Where, let it be where it will—in the sanctuary, or in the private dwelling, or in the barn, or in the field. (1 Cor. i. 2.) *Two or three*, if there be no more. It was not without design that our Lord specifies such a few. This would rectify the mistake of the Jews, who contended that there must be always ten persons present, at least, to give efficacy to social prayer.

It would also encourage His followers, when, in meeting together, their number should be small, either from choice or necessity. *Gathered together*. Not only does the fact of agreement seem essential to the fulfillment of the full measure of the promise (verse 19), but the fact of being gathered together is made a condition no less essential. In addition to there being unity of aim and desire, this unity must be *visible*. *In my name*. It is essential that the worship be in Christ's name. We cannot worship in His name unless we do it by His authority, for His sake, and in dependence on His mediation, dependence on Him for strength to serve Him, and for the acceptance of our persons and services, through the infinite value of His obedience, sacrifice and intercession.

*There am I in the midst of them*. The expression is much more emphatic and decisive than if it had a future form, *I shall be with them*. For it amounts to this: It is always a present truth—I *am* with them. In no age of the world, in no country, shall this be untrue. This cannot be understood of Christ's corporeal presence, for He said, "I am no more in the world." It is also to be distinguished from His essential presence, for by this He is everywhere, and fills heaven and earth. It means a peculiar and gracious presence. He does not say what he will *do* there, but only that he *is* there. He is in the midst of all who are gathered together in His name, however small their number may be, to be the living conductor of the prayer of the believing suppliants upward and the answer downward, to enliven their devotions, hear their complaints, relieve their wants, give them grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from them. He is there to pardon the guilty, enrich the poor, comfort the mourners, be the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow in His holy habitation.

21. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? 22. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

<sup>1</sup>Luke xvii. 4. <sup>2</sup>Chap. vi. 14; Mark xi. 25; Col. iii. 13.

Peter wanted to have a number specified, beyond which he need not forgive. Self-love continually fears, lest it should go too far and give too much. A *sin*, or offense,

properly such, is that which is given wantonly, maliciously and without any provocation. In suggesting *seven*, Peter seems to have had in his mind some Pharaiseal formula: probably he thought the allowance was liberal, and expected to be approved for his magnanimity. The doctrine is, that it is not lawful to set any limit to the principle and the practice of forgiving injuries. This rule, however, must of course be interpreted with sober-minded qualification. The duty of such a succession of pardons is founded upon the supposition of the offender's sincere repentance (Luke xvii. 3), and the absence of any danger from his machinations. There must be faithfulness to the evil-doer himself; he must be seasonably and prudently rebuked for his fault. (Luke xvii. 3.) All that our Lord means is, that we are to study and exercise a general spirit of mercy and forgiveness toward our brethren.

23. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

Therefore, to the end that you may understand the better what I say. *The kingdom of heaven* refers here to God's dealings with men under the Gospel dispensation. *King*, the symbol here of God, who is King of the universe. (Rev. xix. 16.) This is the first of the parables in which God appears in the character of a King. *Which would take account of, i. e.* settle accounts with. *Servants*. These servants were not slaves, the property of their master, for afterward it is assumed that he may sell them, not as an ordinary right, but as the special penalty incurred by an insolvent debtor. The term designates *collectors of the revenue or governors of provinces*. A king, in ancient times and Oriental regions, entered into pecuniary transactions with his servants, or attendants, on a great scale. Sometimes one was appointed by him the governor of a wealthy province, and another, as farmer of the taxes of a district, both paying a certain annual sum for their positions, as is still customary in Turkey and in the East. We are the servants with whom God takes account. Yet this is not the final reckoning referred to in Matt. xxv. 19; 2 Cor. v. 10; but rather such as that

of Luke xvi. 2, and that of the barren fig-tree, when the owner comes and makes a certain investigation, but does not yet close the season of grace—the day of salvation.

24. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

*Reckon*. (See on verse 23.) *One*. The greatest debtor was not selected, but the very first that came to the king's hand, was found to be a great defaulter—to owe a very large sum. Everybody ought to reckon himself that *one*, for we have all manifold short-comings. (Comp. v. 35, xx. 12, 13.) *Brought unto him*. It was no willing act on the part of this servant. He sought it not. This settlement only troubled his soul. He had no desire to face his creditor. What a perfect contrast to the prodigal, who in genuine repentance says, "I will arise and go to my father." Instead of going with our sin to God, our great creditor, to have it expunged by His mercy, we keep at a distance from Him, and the effect of this is, that we are treasuring up additional debt and wrath against the day of wrath. (Rom. ii. 5. See on verse 23.)

*Ten thousand talents*. A vast but indefinite sum is here meant, with the design of showing the weight of obligation when lenity had been exercised toward such a debtor. A myriad was the highest number in the Greek notation. The talent referred to was probably of silver, for in all numbers occurring in ancient authors, *gold* is never to be supposed, unless mentioned. If so, the debt amounted to between *ten and fifteen millions of dollars*—such a debt, indeed, as could only have been contracted by one who, representing his sovereign in some wealthy province of an Eastern empire, had squandered in boundless extravagance revenues that should have swelled the public treasury. This enormous sum, representing, as it does, sins of omission and commission, internal and external sins, in thoughts, desires, words and actions (Ps. xix. 13), leaves us no hope of being able to pay our debt to the Divine law, and lays on each man a load of guilt enough to sink not one, but ten thousand souls into perdition.

25. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

*Had not to pay.* He was *bound* to pay, but had not the means to do so. So it is true of the sinner. It is not that he is just short of the whole sum by which he might clear his account with God—but he has absolutely nothing which can in the least pass current in such a settlement as God requires in the affairs of his soul. And thus, by this spiritual bankruptcy, he has fallen into the hands of the living God, and exposed himself to the whole penalty due to his misdeeds. *Commanded him to be sold*, &c. This custom of selling debtors, how cruel soever we justly account it, was, in early ages, established by the laws of many countries in Europe, as well as in Asia, republican, as well as monarchical. It was also in accordance with Jewish ideas and manners. (See Lev. xxv. 39; 2 Kings iv. 1; Amos viii. 6.) The debtor, however, had a *right* to kind and brotherly treatment during all his servitude, and whether the debt was paid out or not, freedom came with the seventh year, so that his bondage was a sort of apprenticeship. This part of the parable may indicate the heavy penalty of sin—namely, to be “sold into the hands of the enemy.” (See Judges ii. 14, iii. 8; iv. 2, x. 7; also Isaiah l. 1; Ps. xlv. 12.)

*The selling of the wife and children* is a completing feature of the parable, but may incidentally teach us that the consequences of our sins are not confined to us, but often drag those into ruin—*e. g.* poverty, disgrace, &c.—that are nearest and dearest to us. *And all that he had.* Thus stripped of his possessions, the servant had truly nothing left to pay the balance of the great debt. *And payment to be made.* That the proceeds from the sale are not sufficient, does not alter the command. God reveals Himself unto men first as a holy and righteous God in His law and sentence of condemnation, and this must be felt by them.

25. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

*Fell down*, &c., “prostrated himself at his feet.” *Have patience with me*, &c. No complaint is made against the sentence as if it were unjust in principle, or excessive in degree; the culprit only asks, in the extreme fear and anguish of the moment,

that the judge will not act hastily toward him, and thus the righteousness of the verdict is tacitly acknowledged. His promise to pay means nothing more than his desire to escape. This is not the language of genuine conversion; *its* cry and conviction is, “I am not worthy,” “poor, miserable, blind and naked.” The words of this servant prove nothing on the part of him whom he represents, but blind ignorance, unbelief and presumption as to what sin is, the guilt of the sinner, and the holiness and justice of God. No future obedience, even if it were perfect, which it will prove far from being, can make up for past disobedience. Yet, through Christ, God accepts our surrender of all and forgives. (See verse 34.)

27. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

Payment being hopeless, the master is, first, moved with compassion; next, liberates his debtor from prison, and then cancels the debt freely. The severity of God only endures till the sinner is brought to recognize his guilt. It is, indeed, only, like Joseph’s harshness, love in disguise. He is a gracious God, and has a fatherly heart. (Isa. i. 18; Ezek. xxxiii. 10, 11; Rom. v. 20, 21.) He wounds that he may heal, kills, that he may make alive. He does not forgive on account of our merits, but in infinite mercy for His Son’s sake, in whom there is such a worth as to exceed our sins.

28. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

*The same servant.* The very last man we should have expected to be guilty of such conduct. *Went out.* Mark this expression! If the fellow-servant had come to him before the reckoning, or while yet he was in his Master’s presence, he would not have dared to act the tyrant, but “out of sight, out of mind.” A danger of sinning attends the very joy of restored liberty. (John v. 14; 2 Kings xx. 13.) When is it that we forget our obligation to God, and our responsibilities to Him? When, like Cain, we go out from God’s presence. *Found one of his fellow-servants*, one of his fellow-officers under the king. How easy to find a debtor if we seek one! Mark

the difference here. The first case is that of master and servant; in this case both stand, though probably not in the same station, in the same relation of servants to a common lord.

*Which owed him an hundred pence.* The word rendered *pence* expresses a coin equal to about fifteen cents of our money. The amount is comparatively small, as is fit between servant and servant; the smallness of the debt brings the cruelty of the creditor out in high relief. He owed his lord some ten or fifteen millions of dollars, yet could not forgive about fifteen dollars.

*Took him by the throat.* He throttled him—half choking him by seizing his throat. He could not have treated the poor man worse had he been, not his fellow-servant, but his slave; not a debtor, but a robber. It is the conduct of a harsh, heartless bully, and shows that the mercy of the king toward him had not reached his frozen heart, or brought forth one gentle, loving, forbearing thought there.

*Pay me what thou owest.* That the man had a *right* to demand this payment, there is no reason to doubt, yet the exaction of right may not always be right in the sight of God. He wanted everything for nothing himself, but he wanted to let nobody have anything for nothing from him. When we look to God as simply an exactor of duties, we go forth in the same spirit, and are ourselves the greatest exactors of duties from others; but when, on the other hand, we learn to look upon God, not in the light of an exactor of aught, but as a giver of all, we become holier and freer ourselves.

<sup>29.</sup> And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, I have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

The same attitude and the same words which drew compassion from his master are here employed toward himself by his fellow-servant. This itself ought to have reminded him of his duty to forgive as he had been forgiven.

<sup>30.</sup> And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

The more he was entreated, the more severe and harsh he becomes. *Would not*—opposed to *moved with compassion*. (Verse 27.) He would not even “have patience.” Here is the climax of depravity, to be beg-

gars with God and tyrants to our brethren. *Went.* Dragging his prisoner along till he could hand him over to the jailor. This shows that the violence exhibited at first was not owing to a transient excitement. *Cast.* By which he invaded the right of his lord. *Into prison*—unto the debtor's ward. He knows nothing of remission, stands upon his right, and will act according to rigid justice. Ignorance or forgetfulness of his own guilt makes him harsh. (See Gal. vi. 1; Titus iii. 3.) *Till he should pay the debt.* How could he pay it when confined in prison? It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that our Lord meant to teach that for the unforgiven man there is no possibility of ever exhausting the penalty of the law. (See on verse 34, and verse 36.)

<sup>31.</sup> So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

*Saw what was done,* the great injustice and impudence of such an act, on the part of one so recently laid under the heaviest obligations to their common master. *Sorry.* Not anger, but sorrow, is man's proper mood toward sin, for all men are sinners. Wrath against sin is the proper attribute of God. (See verse 34.) *Came and told, &c.* God's saints are forever laying the sins of men before Him in confessional prayer. But God's own omniscience is forever taking cognizance of man's sins.

<sup>32.</sup> Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: <sup>33.</sup> Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

*After that he had called him.* The question, whether after a man's sins have been all freely forgiven by God, he may yet fall from grace, does not here require discussion. This wicked servant is no representative of a pardoned sinner, the scope of the parable being not to teach the whole plan of salvation, but merely to set forth, in its strongest light, the absolute necessity of a forgiving disposition. *Wicked servant.* The language is most severe. No man is so wicked as he that sins against light, excepting the man that sins against mercy. *I forgave thee all that debt* (as soon as, and), *because thou desiredst me*, out of free grace, without any desert and worthiness. The unmerciful supplies God with weapons against himself. *Shouldst*

*not thou also, &c.* The argument *a fortiori* is here employed. If I forgave you that great debt, *much more* should you have forgiven your fellow-servant the trifle he owed you. God first exercises compassion and afterward desires and expects it of us. No answer of the unmerciful servant is recorded. (See Matt. xxii. 12.)

34. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

*Wroth*—angry. Here is represented God's holy and punitive indignation. *Tormentors*, inflictors of chastisements. Criminals were often condemned to scourging. There are tormentors in the world of woe—fellow-sinners, and evil angels—instruments of the just, yet terrible judgments of God. (See Luke xvi. 23; Matt. xxv. 41.) *Till he should pay, &c.* Until with nothing he could pay fifteen millions of dollars—that is, for evermore. His condition was remediless. “Till” does not indicate the time when punishment will cease, but the time up to which it will continue. Since man can never pay the slightest portion of the debt he owes to God, the making the payment of all the

condition of his deliverance from punishment, is the strongest possible way of expressing the eternal duration of his punishment.

35. <sup>a</sup>So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

<sup>b</sup>Prov. xxi. 13; chap. vi. 12; Mark xi. 26; James ii. 13.

*So likewise*—in this spirit, or on this principle. *My heavenly Father*, Jesus does not say, *your* Father, for whosoever is so unmerciful, is not worthy to be reckoned a child of God. (Eph. iv. 32.) *Do also unto you, &c.* If we do not *from the heart*, not in appearance merely, but inwardly, sincerely, fully, forgive those who do us wrong, God will not forgive us our sins against Him, but will condemn us to the punishment they deserve. (Comp. vi. 12.) As certainly as there is no kingdom of God without forgiveness being *received* by us, so certainly is there no kingdom of God without forgiveness being *exercised* by us. (Chapter v. 7.) A man without compassion, has all against him, God and the world, and meets as many adversaries in judgment as he had associates in life. (Eph. iv. 32.)

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1. What did the disciples say to Jesus? 2. How did Christ reply? 3. Who is represented as “greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 4. What is said concerning any one “who shall offend one of these little ones?” 5. What is said of “offenses?” 6. Explain verses 8 and 9. 7. What is the reason for “not despising one of these little ones?” 8. What did the Son of man come to save? 9. Repeat the parable of the “lost sheep.” 10. What does it teach? 11. How are we to act toward a trespassing brother? 12. Explain verses 19 and 20. 13. What is taught in the parable of “a certain king?”

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## CHAPTER XIX.

2 *Christ healeth the sick; 3 answereth the Pharisees concerning divorcement; 10 sheweth when marriage is necessary; 13 receiveth little children; 16 instructeth the young men how to obtain eternal life; 20 and how to be perfect; 23 telleth his disciples how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God; 27 and promiseth reward to those that forsake any thing to follow him.*

AND it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan; 2. <sup>b</sup>And great multitudes followed him, and he healed them there.

<sup>a</sup>Mark x. 1; John x. 40. <sup>b</sup>Chap. xii. 15.

*These sayings*, probably the collective sayings of Christ in Galilee, now complete. *Departed, &c.* This was the Redeemer's farewell to Galilee, his last journey from

that region to Jerusalem. It was with reference to the fact that this region had been the main scene of His ministry, that the celebrated Julian, the apostate, who was providentially slain in the midst of his efforts to destroy Christianity, exclaimed with his expiring breath, “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!” *Coasts of Judea, &c.*,—not merely came to Perea, but traveled through it. (See Mark x. 1.) *Followed him*, to hear His wonderful words, and see Him confirming them by His works.

3. ¶ The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

*Tempting him*—according to their usual habit, endeavoring to ensnare Him. The mooted question about divorce which they proposed, was a dangerous one, generally, in the country of the Jews, but especially in Perea, in the dominions of Herod Antipas, who had put away his first wife and married one divorced from his brother Philip. They knew that a decision of the question by Jesus either way would expose Him to censure, and, on one side, might bring upon Him the fate of John the Baptist, for a similar declaration. *Is it lawful, &c.* Is it according to the law for a man to divorce his wife for anything whatever that may displease him. The question related to the right interpretation of Deut. xxiv. 1.

4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female. 5. And said, ¶ For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? <sup>c</sup>Gen. i. 27, v. 2; Mal. ii. 15. <sup>d</sup>Gen. ii. 24; Mark x. 5-9; Eph. v. 31. <sup>e</sup>1 Cor. vi. 16, vii. 2.

*He answered*, irrespective of any governing power, and fearless of any snare. *Have ye not read.* (See Mark x. 3-12, where, in the discussion of this subject, there is a somewhat different arrangement.) The authenticity and the Divine authority of the Pentateuch are here directly and distinctly recognized. *At the beginning.* The argument in this and the verse following is, that God, at the beginning of the world, created man and woman, not arbitrarily, or independent of, but *for* each other, as suitable and adapted to each other, in order that they should live together in perfect union, and that hence married persons are to be regarded, not as two, but one, and therefore, by the Divine law, no divorce can be permitted. (See Gen. i. 27.) *Made them* (man as a race) *male* (not a male) *and female* (not a female.) That the marriage tie is to be restricted to *one*, and no more, on either side, is corroborated by the following considerations: 1. The fact that the two sexes are perpetually preserved in an approximate equality in point of number. 2. The immense evils, personal, domestic and civil, that have ever arisen where this great law has been violated. 3. The unequivocal teaching of the Bible on the subject (1 Cor. vii. 2.)

Though polygamy was practised in Patriarchal and Jewish times, it was never sanctioned by God.

*And said.* The words of Adam (Gen. ii. 24), are here words of God. It is all the same, for Adam uttered these words prophetically as a paradisaical, divine, fundamental ordinance. *For this cause.* Because God intended that the two sexes should live together in pairs. In wedlock there is a natural and a moral bond. *Shall a man leave*, literally, *wholly forsake, father and mother.* The relation of parent and child may seem close, but there is one closer still to which it must yield. *Shall cleave*—adhere firmly. The Greek word is from a noun, signifying *glue*, and the metaphor most forcibly intimates that nothing but death can separate them. *Shall be one flesh.* They are two halves of one whole, forming *one person*, in affection and interest, and so to continue as long as both are in the flesh. The Futures indicate the necessary realization of the original relation and condition of the sexes in marriage. The *essential* bond of marriage consists in the unity in the flesh, not in that of the soul, by which latter, indeed, the marriage state should ever be hallowed and sweetened, but without which it still exists in all its binding power, for this life. (Matt. xxii. 30; Luke xx. 35; 1 Tim. iii. 2.)

6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. <sup>a</sup>Mal. ii. 14; Rom. vii. 2; 1 Cor. vii. 10; Eph. v. 28; Heb. xiii. 4.

*Wherefore.* This is the inevitable inference from the original constitution of the marriage relation. *No more twain*, no longer two, as they were before. *What; that which, not those which*, for they are now *one flesh*. *Joined together*, made one. *Let not man put asunder.* Jesus thus rejects the principle of divorce unqualifiedly as a human sundering of what God has indissolubly united. It cannot be done in any case but that mentioned in v. 9, without crime, except by death. (1 Cor. v. 10, 11.) How opposed to this Divine command are many of the legislative enactments by which divorces are granted so freely in our day. The Christian Church, by adopting these words into all its formularies of solemnizing marriage, ought not



to recognize the validity of any divorce, except for the one stated by our Lord.

7. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8. He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

<sup>a</sup>Deut. xxiv. 1; chap. v. 31; Mark x. 4. <sup>b</sup>Chap. v. 32; Mark x. 11; Luke xvii. 18; Rom. vii. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

*Why did Moses, &c.* The Pharisees objected that Moses had given the Jews permission to put away their wives by giving the wife a bill of divorcement. (Deut. xxiv. 1.) Thus the authority of Moses seemed to be arrayed against that of Jesus. *Moses because of the hardness, &c.* Jesus acknowledged that a relaxation of the strictness of the marriage bond was permitted by the law of Moses, but only as tolerating, not as approving, and only to prevent greater evils. It was found to be necessary and expedient from the "hardness of the hearts" of the Jews, which would have brooked no restraint of the kind here referred to. They were not *commanded* to divorce their wives in the circumstances specified, but were only *suffered* to do so, on account of their intractable and stubborn disposition. And they were required to give the wife a bill of divorcement, an arrangement calculated to prevent undue haste in the transaction, and designed continually to bring back the husband who was wishing for a divorce, to the bar of his conscience, and to compel him to make it clear to his own mind, whether it was not a want of affection arising from his own hardness of heart, which produced this wish, rather than any defect existing in his wife. Moreover, though it is true, that as far as the Mosaic statute or the civil law was concerned, husbands had a right thus to separate from their wives, yet it is equally clear that the ground of legal separation would not absolve a man from his amenability to his conscience and his God.

*But from the beginning, &c.* In the original state of things in Paradise. The first instance of polygamy is recorded in Gen. iv. 19, and it deserves special notice that it occurs in the line of Cain, not in that of Seth. This is repeated by our Lord (see v. 4), in order to impress upon

his audience the temporary and purely civil character of this Mosaic relaxation. In every discussion or interpretation, recourse should be had to the origin of a Divine institution. (See Acts xv. 7.) The Governor of the Universe suffers many things which he does not sanction. He allows things to be in the infancy of the race, which he expressly reprobates and prohibits in its maturer growth and development, and always in principle. However inexplicable this may be to us now, we shall be able to understand and explain it hereafter.

*I say unto you.* The great Lawgiver gives to the written word its complement, perfection and meaning. The statement is plain. Adultery is the only sufficient reason of divorce. (See Rom. vii. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 39.) Want of "spiritual affinity," intemperance, neglect to provide for the family, desertion, are not sufficient causes for divorce. Separation from "bed and board" is doubtless justifiable in cases of great and long protracted intemperance, and of neglect to provide. Whatever the law of any State may permit, the Churches of Christ must require their members to conform to the law of marriage as defined by Christ; and ministers of the Gospel should not allow themselves to be *participants in the crime* by uniting in marriage persons the one or the other of whom, according to our Lord's interpretation of the original law, is already in the marriage relation. It is clear from the tenor of the whole passage, that the marriage relation ought to be highly revered and honored. It ought never to be contracted unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, but soberly, discreetly, and with due consideration. Its proper observance is attended by every quiet virtue. The orderly family is the foundation of the orderly society. Those who have entered into this relation, since they form as it were one body, should also have one mind and heart, and live together as heirs of the grace of eternal life.

10. ¶ His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry. 11. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom

of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

<sup>1</sup>Prov. xxi. 19. <sup>2</sup>1 Cor. vii. 2, 7, 9, 17. <sup>3</sup>1 Cor. vii. 32, 34, ix. 5, 15.

*Of the man, i. e., of the husband.* Our word *husband* comes from the Anglo-Saxon *hus* and *band*: the *bond* of the *house*, anciently spelt *house-bond*. *It is not good, &c.* Most of the Jews at this time regarded a person's supposed inconvenience as sufficient to justify a divorce. The disciples, therefore, who had grown up in the midst of such practices, speaking hastily, and under the influence of their habitual impressions, said, that in this view of marriage—as the husband was joined indissolubly to his wife, and she might prove to be a woman unworthy, and ill-adapted to render him happy, unless the power of divorce from such a woman were possessed, it was, in their estimation, preferable not to marry at all. Before we enter into an engagement, which nothing but *death* can *dissolve*, we had need to act cautiously, carefully consulting the *will* and *word*, of God. Where an unbridled *passion*, or a *base love of money*, leads the way, marriage is sure to be miserable.

*This saying, i. e.,* “it is not good to marry.” We are not to understand our Lord as acquiescing in this rash general proposition of His disciples, else could not the Apostle have said, as he did, respecting this very matter, “I have no commandment of the Lord” (1 Cor. vii. 25), when giving us his private opinion, that because of the then “present distress,” it was not good to marry, neither would he have spoken of “forbidding to marry” (1 Tim. iv. 3), as among the most prominent marks of the great apostacy. *All men cannot receive, &c., i. e.,* as the human species is to be continued, and in reference to the great mass of men, the marriage state grows out of the very principles and propensities implanted in their nature by the Creator, all men cannot assent to *this saying*. *Save they, &c.* Any exception to the universality of the matrimonial necessity and duty, is with a rare few—*those to whom it is given* (of God), *i. e.,* those who are possessed of such a physical constitution or temperament, such self-control and Divine qualifications, as to overcome this desire for the marriage state. If persons have reason to regard

themselves as among these cases of exception, and are, in a judicious manner, disposed to act on the saying of the disciples, they are at liberty to do so. Who are these? the disciples would naturally ask, and this our Lord proceeds to tell them in three particulars.

*Eunuchs.* The term means, literally, a *bed-keeper*, chamberlain. There was such a class in the East, subjected to a cruel degradation, and employed to guard the females in the harems. *So born*, naturally incapacitated for the marriage state, or indisposed to it. *Made eunuchs of men*, mutilated in infancy, through the avarice or policy of men. It may also refer to all such as, against their own inclination, are prevented from marrying by the caprice of men, or through unjust regulations imposed upon society. *Made themselves eunuchs, &c.,* that is, who have denied themselves the liberty of marriage, not for the purpose of *meriting* the kingdom of heaven, but in order thereby to devote themselves more entirely to the kingdom of God (1 Cor. vii. 7, 32–35, ix. 12); or, being married, are ever ready to sacrifice their conjugal enjoyments for the sake of their spiritual calling—having wives as though they had none. (1 Cor. vii. 29.) *Origen* fell into sad error on this point, carrying out the literal purport of this clause. And some forbid marriage to the clergy, which is denounced by the Apostle as “a doctrine of devils.” (1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.) Yet, in almost every age of the Church, especially when pioneer missionary work is to be performed, it seems desirable that some of Christ's ministers shall, for a time at least, remain unmarried.

*He that is able to receive it, &c.* “He who feels this to be his proper vocation, let him embrace it.” All the Apostles did not receive it, that is, did not live unmarried. (1 Cor. ix. 5.) Thus, all is left free in this matter. There is no excessive sanctity in celibacy, and no compulsion to marry; but every one, priest and people, must act according to their own personal discretion, constitution, feelings, nature; either come under the law by which marriage is regulated, or have nothing to do with it at all. “From whence it follows,” says *Burkitt*, “that men and women are not by monas-

tical vows to be obliged to live a single life, which some cannot perform without sin."

13. "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

<sup>1</sup>Mark x. 13; Luke xviii. 15. <sup>m</sup>Chap. xvi. 22; Luke ix. 49, 50.

*Little children.* They were doubtless brought by their parents, who, not content with having received a blessing for themselves, entreat this now for their little ones also. *Put his hands on them,* &c. 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.) This imposition of hands was practiced especially in paternal blessing. (Gen. xlvi. 14-20.) *Rebuked them, i. e.,* the parents. (Mark x. 13.) In administering this rebuke the disciples, beside desiring further elucidation concerning marriage and divorce, may have been mainly influenced by zeal for their Master, and concern for His repose: yet on this occasion, as on others, it was against the mind of Christ. (Chap. xv. 23; Luke xviii. 39, 40.)

It is well for us that Christ has more love and tenderness than the best of His disciples have. It is our duty, having first dedicated ourselves, to consecrate our children to the Lord in reliance upon His promise and power. The promise is to us, and "our seed." The souls of young children are evidently precious in God's sight. They are capable of receiving grace. Their parents are their trustees, empowered by nature to transact for their benefit, and therefore Christ accepts their dedication of them as their act and deed.

14. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.—Chap. xviii. 3.

An infant was to the eye of Christ an object of stupendous importance, a subject of immeasurable potentialities, a life for endless development and wondrous destinies. He saw the oak in the acorn, the waving harvests in the little seed. *Suffer,* &c. It was a devotedness highly gratifying to Him, and the disciples interfered very improperly. Our Lord does not say, suffer *these* children, but suffer all little children to come unto me. What precious words are these from the lips of Jesus! How many dying children have lisped them in their last moments! *Forbid them*

*not.* Here those are rebuked who think that children have nothing to do with Christ, and are to be held back, because unable to understand.

*For of such, &c.* Here is the *reason* why 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. The words "of such" do not mean "such as resemble these," but such very children. Persons of a child-like disposition are referred to 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 glory is, and will be, largely composed of little children. The salvation of all who die in infancy may be confidently expected. Though sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. (Rom. v. 20.) Jesus will not shut those out from His presence in glory, whom He would not allow to be sent from His presence on earth.

"I know," says the *Rev. William Jay*, "there are some who believe in the damnation of infants. They have no higher notion of a God of love, the Father of mercies, the God of all grace, than to suppose that He will punish eternally creatures whom the Scripture itself calls innocent as to personal and actual transgression, and whose condition depended entirely upon Himself. Admitting this barbarous notion, could such a Being ever be trusted in, or loved? But the God we worship is not Moloch, neither is the punishment we contend for in a future state, separate from the effects of conscious guilt, regret, self-accusation, of all which those who die in infancy are incapable. We listen not to unfeeling and system-hardened divines, but to that Saviour "who gathers the lambs with His arms and carries them in His bosom," and who, having invited our souls to rest, cries, "suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

15. And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.

*Laid his hands.* (See on verse 13.) *Departed thence, i. e.* from that part of Perea where this incident took place, for He abode still in the region beyond Jordan.

16. ¶ And behold, one came and said unto him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life.—Mark x. 17; Luke xviii. 18. ¶ Luke x. 25.

The narrative which here begins is recorded by three Evangelists. From this fact, as well as because the conversation related was between our Lord and an individual, it is evident that it demands and deserves special attention. *One came.* This young man (verse 20) was a man of wealth (verse 22), a ruler (Luke xviii. 18), probably the president of a neighboring synagogue, and a person of refinement and excellence of character, as is seen from the circumstances here related of him. It was not common at that period for any of his order to seek the Saviour of the world. Jesus was, indeed, followed by many; but they were usually the poor, the destitute and the afflicted. The thoughts of eternal life are very rare in a young man of affluence and eminence. Happy is he to whom God vouchsafes to give them. This young man did not, like Nicodemus, come to Jesus under the shadow of the night, but on the high road, in the presence of a crowd.

*Good Master*, a title usually employed by the Jews to their most eminent rabbis. This seems to be the only instance in His history in which Jesus was addressed as "Good Master." *What good thing, &c.* He asks about *doing*. What he seeks is not grace, but reward. Yet, still an obscure feeling is ever saying to him that the treasure of his good works is not yet great enough. He wishes to add something to his righteousness, and wishes Jesus to tell him what it is. *That I may have, &c.* He comes not from curiosity, or to have a sickness healed, or to plead about a child, but about his own soul. He sincerely and anxiously wishes to know the way to everlasting happiness. How far does this wealthy, influential young man excel many of his peers in rank and position, who have lost all faith in the supernatural, and who make it their highest boast to deny everything that is spiritual and divine? How promising does his case appear. How ready

are we to pronounce him a hopeful inquirer! This favorable beginning only makes the sequel more sad.

17. And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, *that is, God*: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.  
¶ 1. Sam. ii. 2; Ps. liii. 1; James. i. 17.

Jesus questions the motive of the young man for calling Him "Good Master;" so in His discourse in the plain (See Luke vi. 46); He does not say, *I am not good, but why callest thou me good?* God is good; there is no goodness without Godhead. The ruler partially perceived virtue in Jesus, or he would not have applied to Him. But he did not fully recognize it, or he would not have regarded Him merely as a human *teacher*, neither would he have withdrawn; much less did he recognize His Godhead. Wherefore, Jesus does not accept from him the title of goodness, without that of Godhead (comp. Luke vi. 46), and thereby vindicates the honor of the Father with whom He is one. (See John v. 19.) The young man deals with good in its relative meaning, and in this sense he says: "Good," that is, "Excellent" Master. Jesus teaches him to apprehend good in its absoluteness, and to that end he must understand the being good, which he ascribes to Christ, as being founded in God. Thus the answer is to be explained: If thou wouldst call me good, thou must apprehend my unity with God, and my Divine nature. In this question, our Lord also in part replies to the inquiry of the young man, who, as the subsequent sketches show, had an idea that such goodness as we can attain, was a sufficient title to heaven. There is no being good but God. No human being is so perfect and observant of the Divine law, as to deserve the appellation *good*. Hence, to no good thing which you can do, is eternal life promised as a reward.

*But if thou wilt enter into life, &c.* According to the original, "if thou *wiltest, or art disposed, to enter into life.*" If you desire to work righteousness in order to procure a title to eternal life, you must perfectly keep all the commandments of God. The Saviour shaped His reply in such a manner as ultimately to expose to the young man's own view his deficiencies, and his need of something for salvation different

from what he had heretofore supposed. Thus, the law is our school-master, to bring us unto Christ. At the same time the Lord teaches us that faith and grace do not make void, but establish the law.

13. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, 13. "Honour thy father and thy mother; and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.  
 "Ex. xx. 13; Deut. v. 17; Rom. xiii. 17. "Chap. xv. 4; Eph. vi. 2; Col. iii. 20. "Lev. xix. 18; chap. xxii. 39; Rom. xiii. 9; Gal. v. 14; James ii. 8.

*Which?* If there was any command, which, through ignorance or inadvertence the ruler had neglected, he would like to know what one it was. *Thou shalt do no murder*, &c. 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 specifies only a few of the commandments, which were to represent the rest. He refers to the commandments of the second table, 1. Because we can more easily attain to a correct knowledge of our conduct toward our fellow-men, whom we see, than toward God, whom we do not see, and, 2. 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. He puts the prohibitions of unlovingness first (verse 18); then follows the particular command of positive love, *Honour thy father and thy mother*, and the general one, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. In this last, the spirit and essence of the laws of the second table are summed up. (Rom. xiii. 10.)

20. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

What darkness and self-ignorance did his answer reveal! Doubtless he had observed the commandments in their letter, but he did not see that each precept sent its jurisdiction into the depths of the heart, and charged a thought, a desire, an appetite, with infraction of a holy and a righteous law. (Ps. li. 6; Matt. v. 21-28.) The query, *What lack I yet?*—"in what am I yet behind, or wanting," showing, as it did, a readiness to undertake more than he had yet done, indicated at least that his heart misgave him, and that he felt that he still lacked something.

21. Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.  
 "Chap. vi. 20; Luke xii. 33, xvi. 9; Acts ii. 45, iv. 34, 35; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

*Said unto him.* The Saviour does not confirm the truth of his declaration, but only tells him what he, in case it is really so with him, has yet to do. *Perfect*, that is, complete in every respect, if thou wilt be without deficiency. The young man wished a high standard of righteousness, and now it is presented to him. Not absolute, but comparative perfection is here spoken of. God only is absolutely perfect. The Jewish nation thought it perfection to sell all and give to the poor. *Go and sell*, &c. This command was given to the ruler to cure his love of the world, which could not, in him, be cured otherwise, and to bring him to self-knowledge and whole-heartedness by having a great problem of practical obedience to solve. The task which the Saviour assigned him was in perfect accordance with his declaration concerning himself. 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! Though all Christians are not required to do what was enjoined on the rich ruler, yet 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 offerings can and will be made.

*Treasure in heaven*, in place of thy treasure on earth. (Lam. iii. 24-27.) *Follow me*. Here was the Gospel hidden in this brief command. Jesus preached faith to this inquirer. To follow Christ, was to acknowledge Him as the Messiah of God, possess His spirit, trust in His righteousness, and imitate His example.

22. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Men undergo great agony of mind while they are in suspense between the love of the world and the love of their souls. When the first absolutely predominates, then they enjoy a factitious rest through a false peace; when the latter has the upper hand, then they possess true tranquility of mind, through that peace of God that passeth knowledge.

*For he had great possessions.* 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, thus showing us what harm one master-sin may do to a soul. We never read a word to show that he was subsequently converted. The saying of Jesus (verse 23) would seem to indicate that he was not. Thus the day that dawned so brightly closed in gloom.

23. ¶ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

\*Chap. xiii. 22; Mark x. 24; 1 Cor. i. 26; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

The Saviour, employing the occasion which had presented itself for instruction, proceeds to speak very freely on the dangers connected with worldly possessions. A *rich man*, not only one who has so many hundreds or thousands more than some of his neighbors, but any one who has more than is necessary for the decent and comfortable support of himself and his family. *Hardly enter*. There is, in itself, no more sin in being rich than there is virtue in being poor. It is not the possession of a thing that may constitute a disqualification for heaven, but it is the excessive idolatry of the thing. The man who has a small income may have his heart as much taken up with it as a man who has an income of many thousands a year. Experience tells us that, except in some few, rare and blessed instances, it cannot be but that the man who possesses abundance, will find the difficulty of a simple faith immeasurably increased. *Enter into the kingdom of heaven*—be induced to become Christians, and be prepared for the Church on earth and the state of the blest in heaven. A rich gentleman once said to a day-laborer, "Do you know to whom these estates belong on the borders of the lake?" "No," replied the laborer. "They belong to *me*," said the rich man. "And the wood and the cattle—do you know whose they are?" "No." "They are mine also," continued the rich man. "Yes, all, all that you can see is mine." The peasant stood still a moment, then pointed to heaven, and in a solemn tone asked, "Is *that* also thine?" How apt the rich are to forget to look upward, and to

ask, "Is heaven mine?" (See on next verse.)

24. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.—\*Jer. xiii. 23.

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 furnish many temptations and incitements to luxury, intemperance and sensuality. 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. Those who possess them, therefore, have peculiar need to take heed to their ways, to keep their hearts with all diligence, and especially to implore with unceasing earnestness and fervor that help from above, which can alone enable them to overcome the world and to vanquish all the powerful enemies they have to contend with. (1 Tim. vi. 17–19.) How few rich men are made uneasy and apprehensive by these plain words of Christ, that their riches might hinder them from going to heaven! The more praiseworthy are those wealthy Christians who devote their riches to the furtherance of the cause of Christ. We should pray daily for rich men's souls. Well may the Litany of the Church of England contain the words, "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us."

25. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved.

The disciples expressed wonder or surprise, if not doubt, as to the salvation of any. They see that even the poorest may have something of the earthly-mindedness which caused the ruler to go away sorrowful. As they were poor themselves, and like all men in their station, their idea of

what constituted wealth would be moderate, their question indicates that they understood the Saviour to speak not exclusively of the overgrown possessors of untold thousands, but of the great majority of mankind, else their inquiry would have been particularly pointless and unmeaning.

How searching the standard of the possibility of salvation which our Lord here presents. "I doubt the conversion of the man," says one, "whose *purse* is not converted." The religion that costs the owner nothing is probably worth about its cost. The great mass of professors of religion, who live to make their children rich, are in immense danger of ruining their own souls and destroying their own children. Though poverty will not save the soul, the dangers of riches should much reconcile the poor to their condition.

26. But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them. With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

<sup>1</sup>Gen. xviii. 14; Job xlii. 2; Jer. xxxii. 17; Zech. viii. 6; Luke i. 37, xviii. 27.

There was much tenderness and sweetness in this reply of our Lord. 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. The energy of Divine grace is able to make a man despise the world, with all it contains, when no efforts of man, no arguments, eloquence or persuasions can do it. He who saved Abraham, Moses, Job and David, in spite of their riches, can save others also. *Grace* and not *place* is the hinge on which our salvation turns. Yet those who are surrounded with the luxuries of life, should feel that their spiritual welfare requires the most earnest, persevering and intense application of all their powers.

27. ¶ Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

<sup>1</sup>Mark x. 28; Luke xviii. 28. <sup>2</sup>Deut. xxxiii. 9; chap. iv. 20; Luke v. 11.

Peter speaks for himself and the rest of the Apostles. He had seen the rich young man go away grieved, and had heard the Lord's declaration concerning the danger of riches, and now his mind reverts with gratitude to the period when he, and those associated with him, had been called, and obeyed the call. *Forsaken all*. The disciples had, indeed, but little to leave, yet it was their *all*, and the same faith would have led them to make larger sacrifices,

if they had been called to it, as they afterward were. *And followed thee*. To forsake all, without following Christ, is the virtue of a philosopher. To follow Christ in profession, without forsaking all, is, alas! too common in those who are members of the Church. But to *follow Christ* and *forsake all*, is what He requires. 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 ever having 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.

*What shall we have therefore?* How shall it fare with us? When Jesus had called them to follow Him, He told them what they were to do; not what they should have. (Chap. iv. 19.) It is evident that Peter's craving of reward was proper, and did not exclude love. At the same time our Lord by his concluding remark, in verse 30, and the following parable, strikes at the root of the Jewish error of seeking reward on the ground of merit.

*Bishop Butler*, of England, who wrote the great work, entitled, "Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion," lived unmarried, and spent his immense revenue in charity and alms. Yet, in his latter days, awful thoughts of his sinfulness overwhelmed his soul. Feeling how little his charities weighed against the impurities of the heart, he trembled before God. But he flung himself, by faith, upon that precious promise of Jesus, "Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," and was richly consoled with the hope, not of being saved by works of righteousness, but by grace alone.

28. And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xx. 21; Luke xxii. 28-30; 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3; Rev. ii. 26.

*In the regeneration*, &c. The reference here is to the end of the world, when God will create "new heavens and a *new* earth." (2 Peter iii. 12, 13; comp. Isa. lxv. 17, lxvi. 22; Acts iii. 21; Rom. viii. 22; Rev. xxi. 1, 27.) This earth shall have its regeneration just as truly as the human

heart. Man is a little world; and the world is but a great man. The one is the type, the foreshadow, the microcosm of the other. And a day comes when this earth shall have sin expelled from every crevice, the fever that torments it from every part. The returning presence of the Lord of Glory will give it that lasting regeneration that shall place it again in the orbit out of which it has wandered eccentrically, re-unite it to the great continent of heaven, from which it has been broken off, and make it no longer an out-cast colony, but part and parcel of the wide realm of glory and beauty, basking in the sunshine, and guided by the sceptre and sway of Him, who is King of kings and Lord of lords. At the same time the bodies of God's people shall be renovated and restored. They "shall be raised incorruptible," and "shall be changed." (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) The same change which will be produced in the dead by the resurrection, will be accomplished in the bodies of the living—as in the case of Enoch and Elias, who carried their bodies along with them to heaven. (See Rom. viii. 22, 23.)

*When the Son of man, &c.* The throne which is the result as well as the manifestation of His glory. (See Heb. i. 3.) *Ye also, &c.* It is here expressed in figurative terms, that the Apostles should attend the final Judge, concurring in the judgment He would pronounce on the rebellious Jews and all others who rejected the Gospel preached by them, and those who should come after them, that in the kingdom of heaven they should have a distinguished pre-eminence of glory and reward, and that a place of honor should be assigned them near the person of our Lord Himself. The manner of expressing this idea was drawn from the circumstance of there having been twelve Apostles, and of Israel having been divided into twelve tribes. (Rev. iii. 21.)

<sup>29.</sup> <sup>b</sup>And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

<sup>30</sup> Chron. xxv. 9; Mark x. 29, 30; Luke xviii. 29, 30.

*Every one.* The promise of reward for devotion to Christ's cause is here made general. Sacrifices like these were doubtless often necessary when the Gospel was

first preached. The offense of the cross is not yet ceased. Christians often have to encounter laughter, ridicule, mockery and family persecution. *Shall receive an hundred fold.* This number is manifestly symbolical, as the expression of an immeasurable advantage. The rewards in this world and the next are definitely distinguished. *Wife.* The forsaking of the wife does not imply a dissolution of the matrimonial relation, as is plain from what our Lord had said but shortly before on this subject. Here, incidentally, one man and one woman, as husband and wife, is shown to be the law of the Christian economy.

Many Christians have lost their possessions and have been separated from their families, because they chose to obey God rather than men, and though they may not, in every case, have been rewarded in the *very things* they renounced, yet have they received that peace, joy and happiness which have recompensed them an hundred fold for all the sacrifices they made for Christ and His Gospel, and a degree of comfort, tranquility and encouragement, far beyond anything that all the wealth and splendor of this world can bestow.

*Inherit everlasting life.* To the earthly advantages of godliness, life everlasting is to be superadded. They shall "inherit" it, not deserve it by merit. (1 Tim. iv. 8.) Jesus will surely make up for the sacrifices to which believers submit for His *name's sake*, that is, for the sake of Him and His cause.

<sup>30.</sup> <sup>c</sup>But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.

<sup>c</sup>Chap. xx. 16, xxi. 32; Mark x. 31; Luke xiii. 30.

Our Lord may be considered to have used this saying, which was a sort of proverbial mode of expression, three times, here (as parallel to Mark x. 31), in the ensuing chapter verse 16, and in Luke xiii. 30. On either occasion it seems to have a distinct meaning, thus reminding us that the words of Jesus are like those precious stones which possess the singular property of presenting a different color according to the different positions in which they are displayed. The saying, as employed here, may be understood as meaning either that many who, in the order of time, were last (*brought in last*) in the kingdom, shall



be first in the reward, and those who claim to be first shall be last, *i. e.*, that many of the Jews, to whom the blessings of Christ's kingdom were first offered, would be the last to partake of them, and that many of the Gentiles, to whom they were to be offered after the Jews, would be the first to enjoy them; or, that some who are now held in high esteem on earth, will not have a proportionate dignity in heaven, while others, who receive but little honor, if any, here, will be blessed there with distin-

guished honor. Many who occupy a high place among men, possess wealth, and all earthly comforts and blessings, yet live "without God," and many who are poor, but pious, will have their condition reversed in the eternal world. (Luke xvi. 25.) "Three things," said an old and eminent divine, "will surprise me in heaven: 1. To find many there whom I did not expect; 2. To find many *not* there whom I *did* expect, and 3. To find myself there." (See on xx. 16.)

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1. How did the Pharisees tempt Christ? 2. State His reply. 3. What did the disciples do when little children were brought to Jesus? 4. What did He say? 5. What did Christ do to the children? 6. Who came to Jesus? What was his errand? 7. How did our Lord treat his case? 8. Could the young man stand the test applied to him? 9. What is said about a "rich man?" 10. How did our Lord answer the question "who then can he saved?" 11. What was Peter's reply? 12. Explain verse 28. 13. Also verse 29. 14. How are we to understand "many that are first?" &c.

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## CHAPTER XX.

1 *Christ, by the similitude of the labourers in the vineyard, sheweth that God is debtor unto no man: 17 foretelleth his passion: 20 by answering the mother of Zebedee's children teacheth his disciples to be lowly; 30 and giveth two blind men their sight.*

**F**OR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

Our Lord had just spoken of rewards—both a reward in this life, and of another in a life to come. He now proceeds to illustrate this truth—to show that the promised rewards are not of *debt*, but of *grace*. (Comp. Rom. iv. 4, 5.)

*The kingdom of heaven*, the outward and visible Church. *Like unto*, &c. As a householder transacts with his servants, so will the Lord transact with those who belong to His Church, and enter into terms with Him. *Which went out*, &c. This feature of the parable affords the picture of a scene, which the return of every morning exhibits at the gate of an Eastern city. \* *To hire labourers*. Different kinds of work are required in vineyards at different seasons. The whole body of workmen in God's vineyard are here represented. God seeks His laborers, not they Him. (John xv. 16.) *To hire* indicates a free compact,

the offering of the covenant of grace *to*, and its acceptance *by* men. *His vineyard*. A frequent symbol in Scriptures to represent the Church of God. (Isa. v. 1, 2; Ps. lxxx. 8. See also John xv. 1.) The Church is the Lord's, yet we are to *labor* in it. God has so ordered things, that the means and the blessings go together.

2. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

*A penny a day*. The Roman denarius, a silver coin, varying from 15 to 17 cents. Though the penny may seem a small remuneration, yet it was not so, for in good and plentiful seasons, sixteen, and sometimes twenty measures of wheat could be purchased for this coin. The wages of the laborer represent the reward which Christ confers upon His servants, but this must be taken with certain explanations and limitations, especially these two, 1. That the reward is partly a thing now begun, and partly something that is completed in heaven. 2. That the value of the reward depends essentially on the disposition of heart with which the workman receives it. These laborers, first hired, may represent the Jews under the first

dispensation, all those in the Christian Church who individually are converted in early youth, and continue in Christ's service throughout a long life, or those who, from special talent, or zeal, or opportunity, do and suffer most for the Lord and His cause.

3. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, 4. And said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

*Third hour.* This, in the Jewish method of reckoning time, corresponded to our nine in the morning. *Standing idle, &c.* Does not this teach us that all is idleness, however laborious it may be, which is not in some shape or way, directly or indirectly, associated with our own preparation for eternity, or with the progress of the kingdom of God upon earth? *Go ye also, &c.* All in the market-place were invited into the vineyard. The invitations of the Gospel are addressed to all; all are welcome to embrace them, and if any do not accept them, they will never forget it is their own fault, and their own fault alone.

*Whatsoever is right, &c.* He refers them, without any definite promise of blessing, to his justice and equity, and they, simply confiding in this, making no inquiry after reward, go away into the vineyard.

5. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

At noon and at three o'clock in the afternoon. (See on verse 4.) God, at "sundry times" as well as in "divers manners," speaks to people and calls them to work for Him. Some are called in tender childhood, others in the season of youth, others only in ripened manhood, or even not till declining age. Timothy was called in the beginning of his days, and labored for forty or fifty years in the Lord's vineyard. The thief on the cross was called "at the eleventh hour," and plucked like a brand out of the fire; one day a hard, impenitent sinner, and the next day in Paradise.

6. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7. They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

*Eleventh hour.* Only one hour before dismissing the laborers at night. *Others standing.* (See on verses 1, 4.) *Why stand ye here, &c.* This is God's word to any who

are neglecting His service; busy, perhaps, and active in worldly things, yet idle about their souls. Ever since our infancy God has called us, by every sermon we have heard, by every warning and mercy we have received, by good advice and good examples, by good thoughts put into our minds, even the secret influence of His Holy Spirit, so that if we are idle (as too many are, to the sixth, the ninth, the eleventh hour), we cannot say we are idle because no man called us; we have not this excuse. If we be idle in what concerns our souls, it is because we do not choose to work. The laborers who entered the vineyard at the close of the day were not called till then. They had no offer till the eleventh hour, and accepted the very first they got. Their case, therefore, affords us no encouragement to put off what concerns our salvation, for a year, or a day, or even an hour. (2 Cor. vi. 2.) Few are ever saved on their death-beds. One thief on the cross was saved, that none should despair, but only one, that none should presume.

8. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

Here begins the second division of the parable, the distribution of the reward and justification of the manner of doing it. *Even*—the time for closing the labors of the day. *Steward*, or overseer of his goods. (See Deut. xxiv. 15; Lev. xix. 13; Job vii. 2; Mal. iii. 5; James v. 4.) The wages are paid in the Master's presence. Christ is the overseer set over all God's house. (Heb. iii. 6; John v. 27; Matt. xi. 27.) The whole economy of salvation has been put into His hands. *Beginning from the last* (and paying them in order) *unto the first.* This order of payment was necessary to give opportunity for the complaint which was about to be made. Had the paying followed the order of the hiring, they would have been off to their homes with their wages, nor have had their envy roused by the generosity which made all alike.

9. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

The steward, acting according to his master's instructions, called first the men who had entered the vineyard at five, and

quitted it at six, and gave each a penny for his work. He did not speak of their merits, but simply gave each his wages. Surprised by the munificence of their employer, these men retired toward their homes with silent gratitude.

10. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny. 11. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, 12. Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

*They supposed, &c.* The steward, evidently acting on precise orders, gave each of these men also a penny, and no more. Had he given them less, there would have been injustice; had he given them more, there would have been generosity; but giving what was promised, was simple and exact justice. *These last have wrought, &c.* We are not, of course, from the murmuring of these laborers, to imagine that anything like envy and jealousy and discontent find their way into heaven. This representation is only a necessary part of the story. *Chrysostom* well says, "It is not right to search curiously, and word by word, into all things in a parable, but when we have learned the object for which it was composed, to reap this, and not to busy ourselves about anything further."

13. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? 14. Take *that* thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15. <sup>a</sup>Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? <sup>b</sup>Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

<sup>a</sup>Rom. ix. 21. <sup>b</sup>Deut. xv. 9; Prov. xxiii. 6; chap. vi. 23.

*Friend, I do thee no wrong, &c.* They rest their complaint on grounds of justice. The householder accepts battle on the ground of their own choosing: and how signal their defeat! *Friend, or fellow, he says, I do thee no wrong.* If I choose to be generous to others, what is that to thee? It should excite thy admiration, why does it kindle thy envy? Injustice! *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?* Who can deny or question this? *Take, therefore, that thine is, and go thy way.* We are to understand the "gift" implied in the words, *I will give unto this last, even as unto thee*, as being eternal life; or, in other words, God Himself. (John xvii. 3.) Hence the parable does not conflict with the many plain texts of Scripture which teach that all who are saved will not have the same degree of glory. Though the title of all

believers no doubt is the same—the righteousness of Christ—yet all will not have the same place in heaven. (1 Cor. iii. 8.) If the vision of God constitutes the blessedness of the future world, then they whose spiritual eye is most enlightened, will drink in most of His glory.

16. <sup>a</sup>So the last shall be first, and the first last: <sup>b</sup>for many be called, but few chosen.

<sup>c</sup>Chap. xix. 30. <sup>d</sup>Chap. xxii. 14.

This is not spoken by the householder, but by Christ, and hence does not form a part of the parable, the design of which, as explanatory of this saying, is once again pointed out, with a manifest reference to chap. xix. 30. The idea of rejection does not seem to be contemplated here at all. All the laborers were called into the vineyard, all were admitted, all worked, all were rewarded. Still, although they were all equal in the absolute amount of wages received, the *last*, or those who began labor during the progress of the day, were made higher than the *first*, or those who commenced early in the morning, by a distinct addition to the pecuniary recompense, that is, a contented, loving, thankful heart. It is not the time of our service that God looks at so much, as the intensity of our devotedness during the time, short or long, that is given us. Some persons embrace the Gospel in early years, but though they gently and quietly pass through life blameless, and are ripening for glory, they are not characterized to the extent to which they should be, by making sacrifices for the Gospel. Others hear the Gospel call later in life, yet in its last years make more efforts and sacrifices for Christ than those who were called before them.

*For many are called, but few chosen.* We cannot understand this as meaning that many hear the Gospel call, and but few are chosen by God and admitted through regeneration into His family, for if we did, it would not be possible to assign to it any proper connection with the lesson of the parable, of which, as the terms of the sentence show, it is the very conclusion and kernel. The term "called" seems to designate, not all to whom the Gospel is addressed, but those only who are effectually called—who obey the call. It involves being a Christian. (See Rom. i. 1, 7, viii. 28; 1 Cor. i. 1, 24; Rev. xvii. 14.)

Hence, there is not a distinction here between saved and lost, but between two classes of the saved. The word *chosen* is sometimes applied in Scripture to that which is best of its kind, more than ordinarily good; and such we take to be its meaning here. Those whom it describes are the few Christians who, among a great number of true and genuine disciples, are pre-eminently unselfish, unworldly, earnest, and Christ-like, honoring their Lord, and making the world wonder. "Very many are summoned, and very many obey and come into the vineyard, and are true Christians, but very few are choice, chief and distinguished Christians, who, chronologically last, shall be from their sacrifices and sufferings greatest and first."

17. <sup>f</sup>And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 18. <sup>e</sup>Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. 19. <sup>a</sup>And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. <sup>g</sup>Mark x. 32; Luke xviii. 31; John xii. 12. <sup>h</sup>Chap. xvi. 21. <sup>c</sup>Chap. xxvii. 2; Mark xv. 1, 16, &c.; Luke xxiii. 1; John xviii. 28, &c.; Acts iii. 13.

Jesus, the third time, foretells His death and resurrection. *Took the twelve, &c.* This was done because He did not choose to declare before His enemies the deeds which they would commit against Him, and thus not only embolden them, but *seem* to procure the fulfillment of the prediction concerning His suffering. *Behold, &c.* (See on xvi. 21, xviii. 22, 23.) The Saviour went willingly to the appointed spot of His sufferings. (Isa. l. 5; John x. 18.) Observe with what calmness and patience He spoke of His coming painful trials. We know not the time of our trials, and hence it is so much the more necessary for us to think seriously of them, and prepare ourselves for them. *Shall rise again.* Jesus mentions His resurrection: 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.*

20. <sup>f</sup>Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.—<sup>b</sup>Mark x. 35. <sup>i</sup>Chap. iv. 21.

*The mother of Zebedee's children, &c.* Her name was Salome. She was one of those truly pious and devoted women, who

attended, through weal and wo, upon the footsteps of our Lord. Of *Zebedee*, her husband, we know nothing beyond his interposing no refusal when his sons were called to leave him (chap. iv. 21), and his disappearance from the Gospel history leads to the inference that his death set Salome free to join her children in ministering to the Lord. *With her sons.* James and John. (Chap. iv. 21; Mark x. 35; See on x. 2.) This shows that they participated in the petition; and indeed, though they preferred it through the medium of their mother, yet it should seem, from the indignation of the other Apostles against the two brothers, that *they* were the principal movers of the affair. *Worshipping him*—falling down before Him, and acknowledging Him as Messiah the King. *Desiring a certain thing*—thus cautiously approaching the subject.

21. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.—<sup>k</sup>Chap. xix. 28.

*What wilt thou?* (See on verse 20.) We are often told, on other occasions, that "Jesus knew their thoughts," and doubtless He did so here; yet He would have those thoughts expressed before He noticed the petition. He still says on the throne of His glory, "What wilt thou?" Let the thought ascend in aspiration, let the desire find utterance in prayer. (Ps. l. 15.) *Sit . . . right hand . . . left, &c.* According to Eastern custom, sitting next to the throne denotes the next degree of dignity, and consequently the first situations on the right and left denote the highest dignities. (See 1 Kings ii. 19; Ps. xlv. 9, cx. 1.)

The request that James and John might occupy the highest posts of honor in the kingdom Christ was about to establish on earth (see chap. xvi. 28, xvii. 1-8; 2 Peter i. 16), may have arisen from the fact that they had been distinguished on some former occasions (Mark v. 37; Matt. xvii. 1), as well as from a want of right apprehension of our Lord's language in xix. 28. Though this request must unequivocally and decidedly be condemned as being ambitious, it nevertheless showed remarkable faith in our Lord's final triumph; for as He had just before (verse 18, 19) announced

His approaching suffering and death, it was something to believe, as this mother did, that notwithstanding all these afflictions, He would yet show Himself a King.

Let us be on our guard against the secret workings of ambition. Instead of wishing to be commended above our fellow-Christians, more noticed, admired, honored, we ought to esteem others better than ourselves. Philip, King of Macedon, as he was wrestling at the Olympic games, fell down in the sand, and, when he rose again, observing the print of his body in the sand, cried out: "O, how little a parcel of earth will hold us when we are dead, who are ambitiously seeking after the whole world whilst we are living!"

22. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, we are able.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xxvi. 39, 42; Mark xiv. 36; Luke xxii. 42; John xviii. 11. <sup>2</sup>Luke xii. 50.

With what gentleness did our Lord answer the two brethren! He knew they had forsaken all to follow Him. He knew that they would prefer shame and suffering with Him, to any honor or joy apart from Him, therefore He treated them with tenderness. *Ye know not what ye ask.* The petition was in reality for a large measure of suffering. Men *sigh* for wealth, or some distinction in life, or some other earthly favor, and when their desire is granted, they find that their success has brought with it some care or sorrow, some snare or temptation, which they would otherwise have been free from. (Jer. xlv. 5.) Far better is it to leave all our temporal concerns in God's hands, neither asking nor wishing for anything but what seemeth best to Him in His wisdom and goodness. We may ask in ignorance for what would not really be for our good. *Are ye able to drink, &c.* The Hebrews usually compared whatever is dealt out to men by the Almighty (whether good or evil), to a cup of wine. Hence *cup* came in general use to signify a portion assigned (Ps. xvi. 5, xxiii. 5), whether of pleasure or sorrow. But the expression was more frequently used of *evil* than *good*. (See John xviii. 11; Matt. xxvi. 39, 42; comp. Ps. lx. 3; lxxv. 8; Isa. li. 17, 22; Jer. xxv. 15; Lam. iv. 21.)

*Baptized with, &c.* To be overwhelmed

with the sufferings which are to come upon me. The imagery is varied, but the idea is the same as that of the preceding clause. The object of this question seems to have been, to try how far those two men were *capable* of the dignity to which they aspired; and this on the principle that he who is able to suffer most for Christ's sake, will be nearest to Him in His kingdom. (Phil. iii. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 12.) *We are able.* Here they own their mother's petition for them as their own. In making this reply, they little knew to what they pledged themselves, and their views were, doubtless, in many respects, mistaken; yet we may take their answer as an instance of a sincere, noble and generous faith, which, for the sake of unseen blessings, is willing to venture all that is present. Not knowing exactly whither they might be led, they were yet resolved to go forth at God's word, to drink of His cup, to be baptized with His baptism, and trust Him for the result. (See Acts xii. 1, 2, iv. 3, v. 40; Rev. i. 9.)

23. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but, to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

<sup>1</sup>Acts xii. 2; Rom. viii. 17; 2 Cor. i. 7; Rev. i. 9. <sup>2</sup>Chap. xxv. 34.

*Drink of my cup, &c.*—undergo sufferings patterned after mine. *Be baptized, &c.* The baptism our Lord speaks of evidently refers to His sufferings. In calling His sufferings a *baptism*, he may refer either to the *origin*, the *nature*, or the *degree* of His sufferings. 1. Their origin. The baptisms under the law, to which no doubt there is a reference, were Divine appointments, and our Lord's sufferings were "determined," "fore-ordained." (Acts iv. 26-28; 1 Peter i. 20.) 2. Their nature. Baptism marked the person and thing baptized as sacred, devoted to God, and the sufferings of Christ marked him out as the "elect, righteous servant of God." (Isa. xlii. 1; John i. 29.) 3. Their severity. Some, though not all, the legal baptisms, were immersions, submersions. When we consider the nature, number, variety, severity, early commencement, close succession, strange complication and long continuance of our Lord's sufferings, we may well say, He was plunged into an abyss of sufferings. (Ps. xlix. 2.)

*But, to sit on my right hand, &c.*—to possess the high seats of glory and bliss in heaven. *Is not mine to give, &c.* It is denoted, by the words “It shall be given to them” being in italics, that there are no such Greek words in the original. They were inserted by the translators in order to make the sense clear, yet, perhaps, if they were omitted the sense would be more clear. Certainly the omission of them would make the passage in full accordance with the whole tenor of Scripture, which, as the verse stands in our translation, it certainly contradicts. (See John v. 12.) The passage should be rendered thus:—“To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but (except) to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.” To any other, Christ, who is one with the Father, could not, and would not give it: but that it is His to give, is distinctly declared by our Lord. (John v. 22; Matt. xv. 34.) *For whom it is prepared, literally, has been made ready of my Father.* And who are these to whom the highest places in heaven will be given? The meekest, the most useful, those who are most like Christ.

24. ¶And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.  
 1 Mark x. 41; Luke xxii. 24, 25.

The other disciples were indignant at the request of the two brothers, as it was an ambitious aspiring after honors, to the neglect and disadvantage of their companions and equals. The ambition of one creates envy in others who partake of the same feeling.

25. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

*Jesus called them.* The ambitious request of the two brethren, and the indignant feeling of the ten toward them, led Jesus to call His disciples around Him, to admonish them of their error, and inspire them with better feelings. *The princes of the Gentiles, &c.* The rulers of the nations. (See on v. 19 and vi. 32.) *Exercise dominion.* Both the original words here used imply arbitrary, domineering authority, authority for authority's sake. Jesus does not here condemn the exercise of a just governmental authority, in which the ruler, acting for the public good, is, in fact, the public servant. *They that are great, &c.*

As the term rendered *great* primarily refers to persons great or powerful in themselves, perhaps the expression *princes* may allude to the legitimate rulers, and the term *great* to illegitimate usurpers and conquerors. With this difference, this clause is parallel in sense with the former.

26. But sit shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;  
 27. ¶And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

1 Peter v. 3. ¶Chap. xxiii. 11; Mark ix. 35 and x. 43.  
 ¶Chap. xviii. 4.

*It shall not be so among you.* Your greatness shall not be like that of them who dwell in earthly courts. Our Lord here condemns, not a true ecclesiastical government, but all ecclesiastical ambition, and all aspiration after selfish power. *Great among you*—distinguished, truly great. *Minister.* The primitive sense of the original word is a *servant* who attends his master, waits on him at table and is always near his person to obey orders, which was accounted a more creditable kind of service. *Chief, literally first* in dignity and power.

*Servant.* As desiring to be *great* is a more moderate ambition than desiring to be *chief*, so the word *servant* opposed to the latter, denotes a still more lowly condition than the word *minister* opposed to the former. The original word is often put for *slave*. The lesson is, that the disciple who desires to attain the loftiest dignity, must make up his mind to be characterized and distinguished by the greatest usefulness. True greatness consists not in receiving, but in giving, not in sitting still and being ministered to, but in going about and ministering to others.

28. ¶Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.  
 1 John xiii. 4. ¶Phil. ii. 7. ¶Luke xxii. 27; John xiii. 14. ¶Isa. liii. 10, 11; Dan. ix. 24, 26; John xi. 51, 52; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Titus ii. 14; 1 Peter i. 19. ¶Chap. xxvi. 28; Rom. v. 15, 19; Heb. ix. 28.

Jesus presents His own example, as to condescension and seeking the good of others, for a pattern to His disciples, and a corrective of the ambitious spirit which they had displayed. *Came not to be ministered unto.* As “the Word in the beginning was with God,” He *was* ministered unto, and as the risen Redeemer in our nature He now is ministered unto, “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him” (1 Peter iii. 22), but not

for this came He hither. (John i. 1; Phil. ii. 7.)

*But to minister.* This applies to our Lord's submission or obedience. *To give his life*, the greatest of all sufferings and sacrifices, by a voluntary surrender of it to death. (John x. 17.)

*A ransom.* The word in the original properly denotes the ransom paid in order to deliver any one from *death*, or its equivalent, *captivity*, or from *punishment* in general. Here it evidently has an expiating sense, as it stands in explanatory opposition with the preceding words *to give his life*, denoting its character or purpose. Christ, as foreshadowed by the sacrifices, &c., under the law, and as predicted by the prophets, gave Himself up to suffering and death for the redemption of men. (Isa. liii. 6, 10; Dan. ix. 24-6; Matt. xxvi. 28; John x. 11, xi. 51; 2 Rom. iii. 24-6; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13; Eph. i. 7; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Heb. ix. 14, 28; Titus ii. 14; Rev. v. 9.) An atonement—an atonement by death, an atonement by substitution—is here briefly but powerfully expressed. This is the mightiest truth in the Bible. Let us take care that we grasp it firmly, and never let it go. Jesus did not die merely as a martyr, or as a splendid example of self-sacrifice or self-denial. Those who can see no more than *that* in His death, fall infinitely short of the truth. He died as a sacrifice for man's sin. What we could not pay, He undertook to pay for us. (Heb. ix. 14; 1 Peter iii. 18.)

*For many, i. e.,* a multitude—all. "The term is here general, not denoting many of a fixed, definite number, as opposed to the whole of that number, but *many*, in the sense of a great multitude contrasted with the *single life* of Christ, which was of value sufficiently high to be accepted of God as a ransom for all the rest, who had fallen into legal condemnation. See Rom. v. 15, 19, where this same kind of antithesis is found between the *one* who sinned, and the *many* (*i. e.*, all his posterity) who are involved in the consequences of His sin." (Chap. xxvi. 28; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Heb. ix. 28.)

29. \*And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.—Mark x. 46; Luke xviii. 35.

*Departed from Jericho.* According to

Matthew, Jesus healed *two* blind men on *departing* from Jericho; according to Mark, *one* blind man on *departing* (x. 46); according to Luke, *one* blind man on *entering* the city. (xviii. 35.) These apparent discrepancies related to *time* and to *number*. We may suppose, as the old Harmonists did, two miracles, each at distinct times, and on a different individual; the one as our Lord was approaching to Jericho, the other as He was leaving it again; the former related by Luke, the latter by Mark, and both by Matthew; each, as distinctly related, related in its proper place, and the two, as related conjointly, not absolutely related out of theirs. *If we knew all the facts*, we should see no difficulty; but that we have been left so far in the dark, shows that the thing is of no moment anyway. One thing is plain, there could have been no collusion among the authors of these Gospels, else would they have taken care to remove these "spots on the sun." The writers of these common accounts were too well aware of their mutual agreement and consistency to be afraid of the effects of an apparent collision; they neither apprehended it themselves nor supposed it would be objected to by others. As the credibility of *historians* is not diminished, but rather increased, by such trifling discrepancies as occur in the Gospels, so will not that of the Evangelists be at all affected.

*Jericho*, a city of Benjamin (Josh. xvi. 7, xviii. 21), about eighteen miles east-north-east of Jerusalem. *A great multitude*—gathered probably from Jericho and the surrounding region.

30. And behold, two blind men sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.

*And behold.* That our Lord should meet these blind men when and where He did, while it was one of those marvelous coincidences which, seemingly accidental, are yet deep laid in the councils of His wisdom, and of His love, is, at the same time, a natural circumstance, to be explained by the fact that it was common at that time for beggars to sit by the side of the public roads.

*Blind men*, whether so from birth, or by disease or accident, does not appear. This, however, was their melancholy condition,

and a more pitiable one perhaps cannot be found. One who was himself deprived of sight, has thus feelingly alluded to this affliction:—

“O dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon  
Irrecoverably dark: total eclipse,  
Without the hope of day!  
The sun to me is dark,  
And silent as the moon  
When she deserts the night.”—*Milton.*

*Sitting by the way-side.* For the purpose of begging. Blindness is worthy of compassion even when found in circumstances of affluence and ease—but how much more so when it is attended with indigence and want! The helpless are not to starve, nor are we indiscriminately to reject every application we meet with on the road, yet, 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.

*When they heard that Jesus passed by.* The sound of numerous feet, and the clamor of many voices, drew the attention of the blind men, and they were led to inquire what great person was on the road, attended by this great throng of people. The Teacher and Miracle-worker of Perea, is not unknown by fame to these poor men. (Luke xviii. 36, 37.) *Have mercy on us, &c.* No sooner was our Lord's name mentioned, than the blind beggars, deeply impressed with a sense of their affliction, and not knowing whether they should ever again have so good an opportunity, earnestly appealed to Him.

*Cried out.* In the midst of judgments God remembers mercy. Though these men, for wise reasons, were deprived of eyes, the use of their speech was left. There was, on their part, a double confession of faith; first, that Jesus could heal them, and, secondly, as the long expected Messiah. They asked for mercy, conscious that they deserved nothing.

31. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

*Rebuked*—rather charged them that they should hold their peace. They did not wish Jesus to be interrupted. *Cried the more.* Their case was urgent, the occasion was precious, and they called more fervently, using the same form of appeal as at first.

32. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you?

Once the sun of nature stood still at the desire of Joshua, who was eager to complete his victory; and, lo, now “the Sun of Righteousness” stands still, with “healing under His wings,” at the desire of these blind men. *Called them.* Thus He administered reproof, by ordering those to help the poor men (Luke xviii. 40), who had endeavored to check them. *What will ye, &c.* Thus our Lord expressed His readiness to aid, and sought to call into yet livelier exercise the faith and expectation of the petitioners.

33. They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

Now they single out the channel in which they desire the solicited mercy to run. “Our eyes are thirsty for the light. To us the wonderful realities of creation have long been a dark and dismal blank. Thine is the power that can reveal them like a new creation to our view.”

34. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

*Had compassion*—pitied. *Touched their eyes*—to show that the miracle was no coincidence or accident, but the immediate effect of Divine power. *Immediately.* The cure was instantaneously effected. How great and welcome the change! What joy, ecstasy and gratitude would they discover! How would they look and gaze—all things are become new. *They followed him.* This was, 1. An evidence of the reality and perfection of the cure; for in other cases where human skill has removed blindness by touching, the restored orbs cannot be immediately used—light is admitted into them by degrees—the man cannot measure distances, nor judge with accuracy, and he is not fit to be left to himself. And, 2. It was an improvement of the greatness of the mercy. “We can never,” say they, “discharge our obligations to such a gracious and almighty friend. But let us devote ourselves to His service—let us continually ask, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

From this interesting narrative learn, 1. These blind men are most affecting emblems of the spiritual condition in which we all are by nature. 2. We are in a hopeful condition in regard to the removal



of this spiritual blindness, as were these poor men. 3. For this we should earnestly and perseveringly pray, resisting every effort to stifle our cry for mercy. 5. When Jesus has blessed us with His grace, let us show forth His praise. 6. Strong faith may sometimes be found where it might least have been expected. 7. There is wisdom in using every opportunity for getting good for our souls.

1. What parable does this chapter commence with? 2. How many of the Evangelists record it? 3. Who is the "householder"? 4. How many kinds of laborers are specified? 5. Who "murmured"? 6. What reply was made to them? 7. Did Christ again predict His sufferings? 8. How? 9. What did the mother of Zebedee's children ask for? 10. What answer did she receive? 11. Explain verse 26. 12. How did the blind men address Jesus? 13. Who rebuked them? 14. What effect had the rebuke upon them? 15. What did Jesus say to them? 16. What did he do to them? 17. What does the narrative of this miracle teach?

## CHAPTER XXI.

1 *Christ rideth into Jerusalem upon an ass, 12 driveth the buyers and sellers out of the temple, 17 curseth the fig tree, 23 putteth to silence the priests and elders, 28 and rebuketh them by the similitude of the two sons, 33 and the husbandmen, who strew such as were sent unto them.*

AND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto <sup>b</sup>the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples. 2. Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me. 3. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, <sup>c</sup>The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. 4. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5. <sup>d</sup>Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. 6. <sup>e</sup>And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them. 7. And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon. 8. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; <sup>f</sup>others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed *them* in the way. 9. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, <sup>g</sup>Hosanna to the Son of David: <sup>h</sup>Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. 10. <sup>i</sup>And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? 11. And the multitude said, This is Jesus <sup>k</sup>the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

<sup>a</sup>Mark xi. 1; Luke xix. 29. <sup>b</sup>Zech. xiv. 4. <sup>c</sup>Ps. xxiv. 1; chap. xxix. 14, 16. <sup>d</sup>Isa. lxii. 11; Zech. ix. 9; John xii. 15. <sup>e</sup>Mark xl. 4. <sup>f</sup>2 Kings ix. 13. <sup>g</sup>Lev. xxiii. 40; John xii. 13. <sup>h</sup>Ps. cxviii. 25. <sup>i</sup>Ps. cxviii. 26; chap. xxiii. 39. <sup>j</sup>Mark xi. 15; Luke xix. 45; John ii. 13, 15. <sup>k</sup>Chap. ii. 23; Luke vii. 16; John vi. 14, vii. 40, ix. 17.

*Drew nigh, &c.* There is a close verbal resemblance between the Evangelists in this remarkable portion of our Lord's history, yet with enough diversity of expression to establish their respective claims to independent authorship. The thread of the narrative requires that we should read in Luke xix. 2-28, and John xii. 1, 9-11, before this triumphal entry into Jerusalem. (See xx. 17, 18.) *Bethphage*, a village between Bethany and Jerusalem, near the summit of the Mount of Olives. No trace of it now exists. *Two disciples*, probably

Peter and John. *An ass tied, &c.* Asses and mules were in common use in Palestine; they were not so mean as they are regarded among us, but, when rightly trained, they were active and beautiful in appearance. Even Solomon rode on a mule in state. (See 1 Kings i. 38; Gen. xxii. 3; Ex. iv. 20; Judg. x. 4.) Horses were seldom to be met with. *Loose them, &c.* This act seemed violent on the part of the disciples, but was not so, inasmuch as the Lord knew beforehand the consent of the owner would be given, and communicated that assurance to the disciples. Here is an instance of Christ's perfect knowledge. He says: 1. Ye shall find an ass tied, &c. 2. On which no man ever sat. (Mark xi. 2.) 3. As ye enter into the village. (Luke xix. 30.) 4. The owner shall at first seem unwilling to have the animal loosed. 5. When he hears the Lord has need of it, he will let it go. Alone or in company, by night or by day, in private or in public, Jesus is acquainted with all our ways. This is a thought that ought to exercise a restraining and sanctifying effect on our souls.

*If any man, &c.* Without doubt, the owner of the beast was one of the many concealed friends of Christ. Not "*our* Lord," or "*your* Lord," but "*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. There is no doubt that Jesus chose this kind of entry with special reference to the prediction of the prophet, five hundred and fifty-five years before, and thus as a symbolical representation of the unwarlike, peaceful character of the true Messiah and His kingdom. *Tell ye the daughter, &c.*, is found in Isaiah lxii. 11. Zion or Sion was one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built, and it was employed as a name equivalent to Jerusalem. By a mode of speech common among the Hebrew writers, *daughter of Zion* means Sion itself; and as *Zion* is put for *Jerusalem*, the expression *daughter of Zion* means *city of Jerusalem*. (See Zech. ix. 9.) *As Jesus commanded*. We must not hesitate to obey when God commands. *The ass and the colt*. The owner allowed them to be taken, assured that they were for the Master's use, and would be safely and speedily restored. Both beasts were brought to exhibit the appearance of a regal relay. The disciples spread their mantles, instead of a saddle, upon both the beasts, uncertain which Jesus intended to ride. This was a token of honor. *Set him*, more literally, *assisted Jesus to mount thereon*. Hitherto our Lord had discouraged all demonstrations in His favor. But now His earthly mission was drawing to a close, and it was not fitting that the Lamb of God should come to be slain privately and silently. Besides, there was, so to speak, a necessity that Jesus just then should manifest in the most open manner, His claim to be the King, anointed from on high.

*Very great multitude*. Some gathered for the passover, others attracted by the recent miracle of raising Lazarus at Bethany, swelled the train from Jericho. *Spread, &c.*, in conformity with a very ancient and still existing custom on state occasions in the East, of honoring royal and illustrious persons, by covering the ground over which they are to pass. *Cut down branches, &c.* The people were wont to cut branches of palm at the feast of

tabernacles. From remote antiquity these branches were an emblem of victory and joy. *Multitudes . . . . . cried, &c.* 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. The disciples, who deemed that the long desired hour had at length come, proceeded, joined by the multitude, to raise the cries, taken from the Psalms, which were regarded by all the Jews as appropriate to the Messiah, and proper to hail His appearance:

"Hosanna!  
Blessed is the King of Israel,  
That cometh in the name of the Lord.  
Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David,  
That cometh in the name of the Lord."

*Hosanna, i. e.*, save now. *Hosanna in the highest*. This was the very loftiest style in which He could be saluted—the promised Deliverer. *That cometh*—one of the titles of the Messiah. (Matt. xi. 3.) *Into Jerusalem*. The city, crowded at this time, with strangers in addition to the inhabitants, was *moved*—stirred by this triumphing clamor—and men asked one another, *Who is this?* and when they heard, "*It is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth,*" no further explanation was needed. So convinced were the people of His Divine mission, that His obscure and humble origin was no longer a stumbling-block in the way of their acknowledgment of His claims, or deterred them from declaring that He was from Nazareth, that most despised of all Galilean towns.

<sup>12</sup> And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves.

<sup>13</sup> Mark xi. 11; Luke xix. 45; John ii. 15. <sup>14</sup> Deut. xiv. 25.

Our Lord was both King and Priest, and as in the former transaction He had fulfilled the memorable prophecy of Zechariah, so now He fulfills the promise in Malachi iii. 1-3. *Went, &c.*, not to the court, or the palace, for His kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world. Jesus found His Father's house in a state which too truly shadowed forth the general condition of the whole Jewish church—everything out of order, and out of course. *Cast out, &c.* A similar transaction occurred at the beginning of Christ's ministry, about three years before. (John ii. 3-15.)

In the southern part of the spacious outer court of the temple, was a large place 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, &c. (See 1 Kings viii. 41.) *The tables, &c.* The counters of those who exchanged, at a certain premium, foreign coin into Jewish, in which the annual tax to the temple had to be paid. *Sold doves.* (See Lev. v. 7, xiv. 22, also xii. 8; Luke ii. 24.) The toleration of evil is the procurement of it. The house of God should not be devoted to secular purposes. (Ps. xciii. 5.) Christ's zeal for the holiness of the Church and the sanctification of souls is here indicated.

13. And said unto them, It is written, "My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.

"Isa. lvi. 7. "Jer. vii. 11; Mark xi. 17; Luke xix. 46.

Christ, in first casting out the buyers and sellers from the temple, called it His "Father's house," now, *my house*, claiming equality and unity with the Father. *It is written.* (See Isa. lvi. 7, also Jer. vii. 11.) Even in purifying the temple from profane uses, our Lord supported His conduct by a text of Scripture. All reformation in churches should be built upon God's Word. The temple was a type of that spiritual temple to which all nations, under Messiah's reign, were to resort as a *house of prayer*, and, therefore, it was not to be polluted by secular affairs. *Den of thieves*—a terrible antithesis to the house of God. In Judea, robbers and bandits found shelter in caves and recesses of rocks. All who make unfair gains and tell falsehoods when they buy or sell, are counted thieves by God. Avarice, covered with the veil of religion, is one of those things on which Christ looks with the greatest indignation in His Church. Our bodies are accounted the temple of the Lord. (2 Cor. vi. 16.) We should pray to Him now to cast out from our hearts whatever displeases Him.

14. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. 15. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased. 16. And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"—Ps. viii. 2.

Jesus cast out some, but He received others.

He turned the desecrated temple again from a den of robbers into a house of mercy. The *blind* and the *lame* did well to come to Him *then*, for those hands whose touch was health, would soon be stretched upon the cross. (See Isa. xxxv. 5, 6; Acts ix. 2, xix. 9, 23, &c.; Psalms cxix. 18, xxv. 4, cxliii. 8.) *The children*, some of them, perhaps, leaders of the blind, or even supporters of the lame, having caught up the sound of the acclamations (verse 9), they were regardless of the favor of the Pharisees. Their simplicity of heart gave them a courage which many weak believers had not. *Hosanna, &c.* Recognizing Him as the promised Messiah. Over His own people Jesus weeps, but with these little ones He rejoices. How fitting that child-like voices should shout the praises of Him who allowed not children to be forbidden to come to Him! No doubt many children were wicked in those days as well as in our own, but we never hear of any who spoke against Christ. *Perfected praise.* In referring His enemies to Psalms viii., our Lord referred them to one of the most glorious declarations in prophecy, of His own entire dominion over all created beings in heaven and earth. (See 1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 22; Heb. ii. 6-8.)

17. ¶ And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. 18. ¶ Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered. 19. ¶ And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away! 20. ¶ And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! 21. Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea: it shall be done. 22. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

¶ Mark xi. 1; John xi. 18. ¶ Mark xi. 12. ¶ Mark xi. 13. ¶ Mark xi. 20. ¶ Chap. xvii. 20; Luke xvii. 6. ¶ James i. 6; 1 Cor. xiii. 2. ¶ Chap. vii. 7; Mark xi. 24; Luke xi. 9; James v. 16; 1 John iii. 22 and v. 14.

*And went out.* Jesus withdrew into retirement, as He did not wish to remain in the city while the minds of the populace were so excited in His favor, lest He should be thought to affect the regal government. *Lodged there*, probably at the house of Lazarus and his sisters. With what interest must this favored family, whose hospitality He so often shared, have marked His movements, and listened to His every word, as He sojourned among them!

Happy the home to which Christ comes,  
Where oft He is a guest:  
Whose every inmate He approves,  
That home is ever blest.

*In the morning.* This was Tuesday the week of His passion. *He hungered*, either because He did not wish to incommode the kind family of Lazarus at that early hour, or because it was considered unbecoming to take the morning meal before the hour of morning sacrifice, which was nine o'clock. Our Lord's hunger reminds us that He had a body like our own, and was subject to all our infirmities, except sin. *A fig tree.* The tree seems to have been of the sycamore species, which, it is well known, was found in Palestine in great abundance by the way-side, and the peculiar property of which is, that it is always green, and yields fruit several times in the year, without regard to any particular seasons. Besides, it is a fact not less well known, that the fruit of all kinds of fig trees always appears sooner than the leaves, and although the period for gathering the fruit was not at this time yet arrived, yet it is not uncommon to meet with some vigorous trees which show figs thoroughly ripe six weeks before the arrival of the general season, and the beautiful and luxuriant foliage of this particular tree which our Saviour approached, seemed to indicate that it was in a healthy and flourishing condition. According to the ordinary course of nature, some fruit-bocccores, if not winter-figs, ought to have been growing on it, for the early appearance of the leaves was a proof that the preceding winter was short and mild, and the winter-fig likely to remain on the tree.

*Leaves only*—like a hypocrite with a fair show of profession. To the question, "How is Christ, who is omniscient, represented as expecting to find figs on this fruitless tree?" it may be replied, 1. Speaking as a man, and acting throughout as the perfect man, He might have expected fruit. 2. Christ knew the tree had no fruit, but He intended to use it as a symbol by which to impress a great moral lesson on those that were with Him, and accordingly approached it that its state might be known to all. When God is said to have come down from heaven to see if there were any that did

good, this does not mean that God was ignorant of the state of the earth. *Let no fruit grow*, &c. Every previous miracle of Christ had been expressive of unmingled beneficence; there was now needed some Divine manifestation of justice and judgment, also, to show that what is God's strange work is not unknown or impossible to Him—the work of righteous retribution. But a little while before, our Lord had bewailed the foreseen desolation of Israel, as having been unfaithful to her covenant promises, and about to frustrate her covenant hopes. Now He teaches the same fact by symbolic action. *Forever*, in this place, means "until the age," that is, the age when the Jew shall be grafted in, &c. (See Rom. xi. 17.) *Withered away*—began to become dry and dead. All fruitless professions of Christianity are in awful danger of becoming like this withered fig tree. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23), is the only sure proof that we are savingly united to Christ. The astonishment of the disciples at seeing how soon the fig tree had *withered away*, afforded our Lord an occasion to instruct them in the nature and power of faith.

*If ye have faith and doubt not, i. e.*, do not hesitate through unbelief. The union of the positive and negative form of assertion is often employed for the sake of emphasis. *Ye shall not only do this*, &c. It is evident that not physical, but moral obstacles to the progress of His kingdom were in the Redeemer's view, and that what He designed to teach was the great lesson, *that no obstacle should be able to stand before a confiding faith in God.* (2 Cor. xii. 10; see on chap. xvii. 20; Luke xvii. 6.)

*And all things*, &c. This promise is to be limited in the nature of the case, to such things as are proper for us to receive, and suitable for God to bestow. *In prayer.* It is by prayer that such victories are attained. Faith is the soul, prayer is the body; both must be combined in the service of God. *Believing.* This trust must necessarily be regulated by God's own promise. *Ye shall receive.* For God will not grant the power of faith for a gift; He will not grant either in kind or in equivalent.

23. ¶ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Mark xi. 27; Luke xx. 1. Ex. ii. 14; Acts iv. 7, and vii. 27.

*Chief Priests, &c.* These enemies of Jesus were always on hand to find some occasion to accuse Him before the Roman governor, or to awaken the prejudices of the Jews. Their first question here 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. Their second question related to the *source* of this authority—what evidence was there that it was Divine? *These things*, entering the city with such a train of attendants, reforming the economy of the temple, and receiving from the people the title of the Messiah. If Jesus had replied, “by the authority of God,” they would have accused Him of blasphemy, and if He had said, “by my own,” of rebellion.

24. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? 26. But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people: for all hold John as a prophet. 27. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Chap. xiv. 15; Mark vi. 20; Luke xx. 6.

*Answered.* What wonderful wisdom does this answer of Jesus show! 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. (See Acts i. 22, x. 37, xviii. 25.) *From heaven, or of men*—a Divine or a 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 especially 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. *They reasoned, &c.* They retired an instant, and made the matter an object of common deliberation. *Say, from heaven.* They saw and felt the dilemma in which they were placed. They knew that in ac-

knowledging John’s mission to be from God, which they believed it to be, their sagacious opponent would confound them with the inquiry, *Why did ye not then believe him? 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.

*But . . . . . of men.* Here was the other horn of the dilemma. If they denied John’s Divine mission, they feared the violence of 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. *For all hold John, &c.* 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. Even Herod, who slew Him, trembled at His name as of a holy and God-sent man. These chief priests and scribes feared the people, as Herod did before them. They had often taught the people the efficacy of such violence, when argument and reason failed them, and now they were afraid that their teaching would react upon themselves, and bring down punishment, if they pronounced John an impostor.

*We cannot tell.* They did not like to confess. They feigned an ignorance which they did not possess, for the two possible causes lay open to their discernment, but, in their depravity, they could not bring themselves to give honor to the generally admitted truth. Their thoughts and outward conduct were in discord and opposition to each other, which is the essence of hypocrisy. *Neither tell I you, &c.* It was useless for our Lord 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.

Observe, 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.

28. † But what think ye? A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.

*What think ye?* Give me your opinion of what I am about to say. Our Lord now becomes the assailing party, and by this question brings the following delineation before the judgment-seat of the conscience of His hearers. (1 Cor. iii. 19.) *A certain man, i. e., God. Two sons.* The righteousness of the demand is grounded in the relation which a father holds to his children. The *first* son is the publican or the sinner. The *second* is the Pharisee or self-righteous man. Both are examples of two classes which still exist. *Came to the first, and said, &c.* The command here given was the general summons made by the natural law in the conscience, by the revealed law which Moses gave, for man to bring forth fruit unto God, and by the preaching of John. *Son.* An endearing address. God is the Father of all mankind, and though sin has rendered us unworthy of His care, it has not destroyed our relation to Him, and with paternal affection He calls us as careless sinners to amendment. *Go work, &c.* The command is not only affectionate, but practical. Not only must we enter the kingdom by faith, but that faith must be operative.

*Work.* 1. This includes a diligent attention to our own personal salvation. 2. An active exertion for the spiritual interests of others. *My vineyard.* Among the cultivators of Palestine in those days there was

an admixture of large and small farms. In chap. xx. 1, in order to provide for the structure of the parable, an agriculturist is introduced who cultivates on a large scale. In *this* case, the man has a portion of ground sufficient to provide for the wants of his family, but his farm cannot afford employment and remuneration to a gang of laborers; the work must all be done by the owner himself and his children. *Today.* This is the language of the Gospel; the command is urgent, and the obedience must be prompt, because the work is important, the scene is extensive, the time is short, life is uncertain, our responsibility is great, the Judge is even at the door, and present facilities may soon be withdrawn; the lamp of life may shortly be extinguished, or the candlestick of the Gospel removed out of its place. Time is one thing, opportunity is another; the cage of time may remain, while the bird of opportunity has flown.

29. He answered and said, I will not, but afterward he repented, and went.

*I will not.* This answer was evil, and only evil, and flowed from its native spring in an evil heart. No excuse was made, no delay was asked for; there was a positive, rude and daring refusal. This son represents the openly and daringly ungodly of every rank, in every age. Some men, alas! take credit for the distinct avowal of their ungodliness, and cherish the fatal error, that because they frankly confess they are not good, this will serve as a substitute for goodness, and because they are not hypocrites, they will be welcomed into heaven with all their vices on their back. *But afterwards, &c.* He came to himself; reflection returned, and he was grievously sorry for his disobedience; perhaps his father's silent grief went to his heart at length and melted it. *And went.* No sooner was he reclaimed than he was employed. Obedience was the consequence, and the evidence of the reality of his sorrow, and the sincerity of his acknowledgment.

Note, 1. The view of true repentance here presented, the heart enlightened as to its relationship with God, the full justice and propriety of God's commandments admitted, and shame for the disobedience with which these have been

met. 2. The necessity of repentance in order to salvation. The *first* son repents. The *second* son is not excluded from the privilege of working, as far as this parable goes. The door is not finally shut against him. But if he is at length found side by side with the *first* son, it must be in the spirit of repentance also. (See verse 32.)

Whilst this parable is far from pleading for wickedness, or intimating that immorality is preferable to morality, the page of history shows that the most unlikely materials are often subdued by Divine agency to holy purposes, and sinners called from courses the most ungodly. An attempt to couch the eyes of those who say "we see," an offer of pardon to the innocent, a communication of alms to the wealthy, would only exasperate and disgust; but this would not be the case with the blind, the guilty, and the poor.

30. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

*Likewise*, with undoubtedly the same spirit. God's demand is the same to all, and the obligation to obey is also the same. *And he answered*, &c. The second son had an answer ready, sound in substance and smooth in form. It was a model answer from a son to his parent: "I go, sir," said the youth without hesitation or complaint. He promised *well*, but did not perform. The scribes and Pharisees, as professing to be zealous for the law, set themselves in the way as though they would fulfill the commands. This, their profession, was like the second son's promised obedience. But they said and did not. (Matt. xv. 8; xxiii. 2.) What a multitude of such are in the world! Children trained up in Christian families often promise well. So do young men, who, are ingenuous, teachable, despising the bondage of corruption, hating even the garment spotted with the flesh. So do those who, under the preaching of the Word, are alarmed, melted, almost persuaded to be Christians, and those who, being reclaimed from various vices, become regular in their lives and attentive to moral and relative duties, and those who, on sick-beds, promise to become Christians if restored to health. But, alas! in how many such cases do the

tears of their connections, the sighs of their ministers, and the triumph of the enemy attest, that if the promise was flattering, the declension was equally grievous, and the end equally fatal.

31. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

4 Luke vii. 29, 50.

*Whether of them twain*, &c. The answer to this sharp question is all too easy. The light is stronger than is comfortable for those owl-eyed Pharisees, who were prowling about like night-birds on the scent of their prey. They cannot profess inability to solve this question, as they had done that other. (Verse 27.) *The first*. The nature of true piety is therefore obedience to the revealed will of God, and this obedience can be compensated by nothing else.

*The publicans and harlots*, &c. Those who were excommunicated from the Jewish church. The last word specializes the usual expression, *sinners*. They are represented by the first son. In all their former conduct they had said no. Now they yield to the voice of truth when they hear it, and enter into the kingdom, embracing the salvation brought to them in the Gospel. (See Matt. ix. 9; Luke vii. 29, 50, 37-48, xv. 1, xix. 2, xviii. 9-14.) *Go into the kingdom of God before you*. This does not mean the way is made more easy, the gate more wide, to the licentious and profane than to the hypocrite—it intimates merely that in point of fact the profane were then and there hastening in through the gate, while the self-righteous were standing aloof. The words "*go before you*," or take the lead of you, indicate that the door of hope was not yet shut upon them, that they were not yet irreversibly excluded from that kingdom—the others indeed had preceded them, but they might still follow, if they would.

32. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

4 Chap. iii. 1, &c. 1 Luke iii. 12, 13.

We must understand *the way of righteousness* in reference to the words of Christ, in John xiv. 6: "I am the way." John came as the forerunner of the Messiah, pointing to Him, the way of righteousness.

*Publicans*—unjust. *Harlots*—unchaste. (See on verse 31.) *When ye had seen it, i. e.,* the wondrous reformation which John's preaching had wrought in these wicked persons. *Repented not afterward, &c., i. e.,* were yet obdurate, and did not repent so as to believe him. How ungrateful, and how mad is the conduct of those who are saying with the first son in this parable, "I will not!" God is our Father, and His service is the most reasonable, honorable, pleasant and profitable. Let those remember who are saying with the second son, "I go, sir," that the vows of God are upon them; that nothing is so dangerous to the soul as false dealing with God; that no character is so rarely converted as a false professor, and that no state is so tremendous as the end of an apostate.

33. ¶ Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

¶ Ps. lxxx. 9; Cant. viii. 11; Isa. v. 1; Jer. ii. 21; Mark xii. 1; Luke xx. 9. ¶ Chap. xxv. 14, 15.

*Another parable.* As if our Lord, addressing the Pharisees, would say, "I have not done with you yet, I have still another word of warning and rebukē." *Householder.* The head of a family. *Planted a vineyard.* This represents God's attention to Israel, His covenant people, upon whom the eminent privileges mentioned in Rom. ix. 4, were conferred as a sacred trust to be cultivated and improved. (See Deut. xxii. 32; Isa. v. 1-7; Ps. lxxx.) *Hedged it round about.* In addition to a stone wall, or as a substitute for it, the Eastern vineyards have often a hedge of thorns around them. *Digged, &c.* The ancient practice of treading out grapes with the feet still lingers among the mountains of Lebanon. The place for treading out the grapes is sometimes dug in the ground, lined with a coating of either stone or brick. To such an excavation, probably, there is reference in the text, though some think the allusion is to a trough in the earth for receiving the liquor from a foot-press placed over it.

*Built a tower.* This turret or watch-tower answered the two-fold purpose of a place of abode for the keeper of the vineyard, and a post of observation to protect it from thieves and animals, especially dogs and foxes. (See Cant. i. 6, ii. 15.) The

Church must have its towers and watchmen against the assaults of the profane, or the incursions of hypocrites. *Let it out.* 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 these things which were bringing wrath upon the nation unto the uttermost.

*Went into a far country.* 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. (Ezek. viii. 12, ix. 9; Ps. x. 4, 5; Luke xii. 45.) The time of God's forbearance is intimated, during which men act according to their own will. (Matt. xxv. 14; Mark xiii. 14.)

34. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.—Cant. viii. 11, 12.

*Time of the fruit drew near.* 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 the theocratic state, so that the fruits had had abundant time to come to maturity. *Sent his servants, &c.* By the servants 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 might receive the fruits of it.* According to ancient custom, the rent of a farm was paid by a part of the produce. 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.

35. ¶ And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36. Again he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

¶ 2 Chron. xxiv. 21 and xxxvi. 16, Neh. ix. 26. chap. v. 12 and xxiii. 34, 37; Acts vii. 52; 1 Thes. ii. 15; Heb. xi. 36, 37.



*Beat one.* The word "beat" signifies literally, in the Greek, to flay or skin, which, in this case, is supposed to be done by beating. 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. *Killed another.* Rid themselves of the true witnesses of God by a variety of persecutions. *Stoned another.* This was, among the Jews, a common way of punishment. (Deut. xiii. 9, xvii. 7; Josh. vii. 25.) Especially was this the case in times of popular tumult, and of sudden indignation among the people. (Acts vii. 58, xiv. 19.) Isaiah was sawn asunder, Jeremiah and Zechariah were stoned, and Amos was murdered with a club. (See Jer. xxxvii. 15, xxxviii. 6; Jer. xxvi. 20-23; 2 Cor. xxiv. 21; comp. also chap. xxiii. 37.)

*Other servants more than the first.* The repeated messages sent by the prophets, generation after generation, indicate not only the continued patience, long-suffering, and wonderful compassion of God—a compassion not quenched by repulsion—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. (See Jer. xlv. 4; Neh. ix. 26.) There is not a moment in which God does not shower down His gifts upon men, and require the fruit of them. *Various instruments* are used to bring sinners to God. There are prophets, apostles, pastors, teachers; some with their gift after this manner, and some after that. The greatest share of the persecution of Christ's true disciples, has, in all ages, fallen upon the ministers of His religion.

37. But last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

*He sent unto them his Son.* The same authority that sent God's messengers of old to your fathers, has, in these last days, sent to you his Son. The Lord Jesus here speaks of Himself, and thus severs Himself, by the sharpest line of demarcation, from all merely *human* messengers. (Heb. iii. 3-6.) He is God's "beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased"—the "only begotten of the Father, full of grace and

truth." God will send even *Him*, as the last trial of Divine mercy with His covenant people, *as such.* *They will reverence my Son.* 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.

38. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance."  
<sup>1</sup>Ps. ii. 8; Heb. i. 2. <sup>2</sup>Ps. ii. 2; chap. xxvi. 3 and xxvii. 1; John xi. 53; Acts iv. 27.

*This is the heir*—the owner of the property. They confess his being the *heir*, among themselves, but they utter no such confession to Him. *Come, let us kill him.* The owner being absent, they imagine that if the son was dead they could find none to interfere with them in holding the vineyard without paying the rent. *Let us seize on his inheritance.* These rulers were determined to retain the power over Israel. They were afraid of the growing popularity of Jesus, as likely to dispossess them of their place and authority. (See John xi. 47, 48.) 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."

39. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.  
<sup>1</sup>Chap. xxvi. 50, &c.; Mark xiv. 46, &c.; Luke xxii. 54, &c.; John xviii. 12, &c.; Acts ii. 23.

*Out of the vineyard.* A striking prophecy of the crucifixion outside of the city. (Heb. xiii. 12, 13; John xix. 17.) By that, as in the Pentateuch by the exclusion from the camp, was signified the cutting off from the people of God, and from all share in their blessings. (See 1 Kings xxi. 13.) The words expressing the violence of the husbandmen are numerous and graphic: *seize, caught, cast, kill, slew.* They might nearly all occur in the narrative of Christ's own apprehension and crucifixion.

40. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

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 those husbandmen.* 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.

41. ¶He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

¶See Luke xx. 16. ¶Luke xxi. 44; Heb. ii. 8. Acts xiii. 46, xv. 7, xviii. 6 and xxviii. 28; Rom. ix. 10, 11.

*They say unto him.* He compels them to utter their own condemnation. The judgment pronounced is two-fold. 1. *Miserably destroy, &c.*, an emphatic alliteration not easily conveyed in English. "He will badly destroy those bad men," *i. e.* the Jewish state and nation. 2. *Let out his vineyard to others, &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.

42. Jesus saith unto them, ¶Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? ¶Ps. cxviii. 22; Isa. xxviii. 16; Mark xii. 10; Luke xx. 17; Acts iv. 11; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Peter ii. 6, 7.

*Did ye never read, &c.* Their attention is here called to a passage which predicts the very doom which they had unwittingly pronounced upon themselves. *The stone, &c.* 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 workman, thinking too unshapely to work into the structure, throws aside as unfit and of no value. *The same is become, &c.* 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. (1 Cor. iii. 11; Eph. ii. 13, 20; 1 Peter ii. 5.) See Peter's confession of this stone. (Matt. xvi. 16.) *This is the Lord's doing, &c.* The adoption of this stone by the Great Builder as the chief corner-stone in the glorious edifice He was erecting, was so marvelous, that it could be referred only to the inscrutable wisdom and purpose of God. The point which was marvelous was its rejection by the Jewish builders, when possessed, as it was, of all the essential properties which rendered it suitable for the use of the building.

43. Therefore I say unto you, ¶The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.—Chap. viii. 12.

The privileges and blessings promised to the fathers—of which you deem yourselves heirs—seeing you prove yourselves unworthy, shall be given to the people whom ye despise, who, though now cast out among the Gentiles, "shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Isa. lxxv. 15; see before on verse 28–32.) *Taken from you.* The Jewish nation shall be left to be trodden down by the Moslem, the Arab and the Bedouin, and the Gentiles shall get possession of the blessings until that day when the Jews shall be grafted in. *A nation.* Though collected out of many nations, they will as Christians constitute *one nation*—the "holy nation" mentioned in 1 Peter ii. 9. (See Isa. li. 4, lxvi. 5–14; Rev. xix. 11.) *Bring forth the fruits thereof.* Here an allusion is made to paying the owner of the vineyard in *kind*. The returns which God expects for His grace are *the fruits of grace*; nothing can ever be acceptable in His sight, that does not spring from *Himself*. He also expects these fruits "in their seasons." (Verse 41; Ps. i. 3; see on verse 41.)

44. And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

¶Isa. viii. 14, 15; Zech. xii. 3; Luke xx. 18; Rom. ix. 33; 1 Peter ii. 8. ¶Isa. lx. 12; Dan. ii. 44.

*Whosoever shall fall.* Note the rapid yet harmonious changes of our Lord's illustration of the *stone*. The same *stone* is first a *rejected stone*; then, second, a *head-corner*

stone; then, third, a *stumbling-stone*, and lastly, a stone *falling from above*. Jesus becomes more and more stern, as in His prophetic office He approaches the subject of His own kingly judgment. *Shall be broken . . . grind him to powder*. 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 the 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.

Some suppose the expression “grind him to powder,” is chosen with reference to the mysterious stone in Dan. ii. 34, 35, which grinds to powder the image of the monarchies. It recalls an ancient Greek proverb: “The mill-stones of heaven grind the corn slowly, but they grind it to very powder.” It clearly denotes the fearful punishment of the finally impenitent and unbelieving. (See Isa. viii. 14; 1 Peter ii. 8; Luke ii. 34; Matt. xi. 6.)

Many are the ways in which Christ may become a stumbling-stone. The Pharisees denied His Messiahship. Some, in our own day, admitting that He was a *good man*, disbelieve His miracles and His supernatural conception. Some, accepting these, deny His Deity, the vicariousness of His sufferings. Others, believing all this, are yet unwilling to lead the life of self-denial which He requires in order to be His disciples.

Others, oppressed by a conscious load of sin, imagine that the spotless purity of His character is an obstacle to their pardon, and it would be, were it not for that righteousness which arises from His atoning death.

45. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. 46. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.—Verse 11; Luke vii. 15; John vii. 40.

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. But, great as was their desire to apprehend Him, they so feared the people that they dared not resort to violence. A man is in a very desperate condition when wholesome admonition and the denunciation of misery only provoke him to greater wrath and iniquity. Fear of men restrains only the hand, the heart is abandoned to sin so long as it is not controlled by the fear of God.

*Because they took him for a prophet.* As the conscience of the common people was in favor of John the Baptist, so now was it so far on the side of Christ as to receive Him, not indeed as the *Son*, but as a *messenger* to the vineyard. They regarded him as a Divinely appointed Teacher. (See Luke vii. 16; John vi. 14, vii. 40; Deut. xviii. 18.)

Note, 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. How thankful should we be for such inestimable blessings! 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. 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. Nations sometimes make a bad use of their privileges. It may well be feared that we are not, as a nation, living up to

our light, or walking worthily of our many mercies. Must we not confess with shame that millions amongst us seem utterly without God in the world? Undoubtedly the fruit that the Lord receives from His vineyard in our land, compared with what it ought to be, is disgracefully small. 8.

The nation that will not render to God the fruits of His vineyard, may have their privileges in judgment taken away. 9. When Divine truth shows us that we are wrong, we should not be too proud and too fond of the world to confess our past mistakes, and to take up the cross and follow Christ.

1. Where did Jesus send two of his disciples? 2. For what did He send them? 3. What does this narrative teach? 4. What did the "multitude" do? 5. What effect did the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem produce? 6. What did He do in the temple? 7. What is said of the chief priests and scribes? 8. Where did Christ go to lodge? 9. Give the history of the fig-tree He saw? 10. What precious promise is made to the prayer of faith? 11. How did Jesus answer the chief priests and elders in the temple? 12. What did the "certain man" say to his "first son?" 13. What did the son reply? 14. What is said of the "second" son? 15. What are the great lessons of this parable? 16. What does the parable of the "householder" teach? 17. Explain verse 44. 18. Repeat the practical reflections at the end of the chapter.

## CHAPTER XXII.

1 *The parable of the marriage of the king's son.* 9 *The vocation of the Gentiles.* 12 *The punishment of him that wanted the wedding garment.* 15 *Tribute ought to be paid to Cæsar.* 23 *Christ confuteth the Sadducees for the resurrection.* 34 *answereth the lawyer, which is the first and great commandment.* 41 *and poseth the Pharisees about the Messias.*

The parable, with which this chapter opens stands connected, both historically and logically, with the two which immediately precede it. Yet the lessons which they teach, though in some respects parallel, are to a great extent distinct. In the last parable our Lord was indeed the son, the only and beloved son, of the householder, but in *this* one His race is royal, and He appears as the king's son. (Ps. lxxii. 1.) *There*, God appears demanding something from men; *here*, He appears more as giving something to them. *There*, He is displeased that His demands are not complied with; *here*, that His goodness is not accepted. *There* He requires; *here* He imparts.

This parable, and the one given by Luke, of the Great Supper, are not to be regarded as one and the same. In *that*, it is simply a *man* who makes the supper and bids many. In *this*, it is a *king* making a marriage for his son. The former displays the ingratitude of the recusants; the latter, their rebellion, daringly sealed by the blood they shed of the subjects of their king. (See on Luke xiv. 16.)

AND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, 3. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come, Luke xiv. 16, Rev. xix. 7, 9.

*Kingdom of heaven is like, &c., i. e.,* just as it was at and with the wedding-feast which a king made for his son, so is it also found to take place in regard to the blessed fellowship of men with Christ, to which they are invited. (Zeph. i. 7, 8; Prov. ix. 1.) *A certain king, &c.* The two important features here are the royal state of the Father, and the specific designation of the supper as the nuptial feast of his Son. "The King who made the marriage-feast," says *Luther*, "is our Heavenly Father, the Bridegroom is His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bride is the Christian Church, we and all the world, so far as it believes." (See Isa. lxi. 10, lxii. 5; Hosea ii. 19; Matt. ix. 15; John iii. 29; Eph. v. 32; 2 Cor. xi. 2.) How are our ideas exalted of the inexhaustible riches of Divine grace, when the nuptial entertainment is described as being given by a great and powerful monarch at the marriage of his son, the heir to the name and honors of his house! The *marriage-feast* points manifestly to redemption completed in the incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ.

*And sent forth, &c.* In the East, persons giving an entertainment are in the habit of despatching *two different* invitations;

one when they resolve on having the banquet, mentioning the day and hour of the expected meeting, and the other sent a little before the assembling of the guests, to announce that all the preparations for the feast are completed. (Esth. v. 8, vi. 14.) This second invitation is sometimes, with persons of the highest rank, followed by a third. These "servants" did not announce the feast as a new thing, then for the first time made known; they spoke of it as that which was promised before, and actually offered. Men were bidden to the great festival of love by patriarchs, prophets and priests. *And they would not come.* Notice, it is not said, they *could* not come, but, they *would* not come. It was neither to their taste, disposition, nor liking. The reason why any one rejects the Gospel is not that he cannot believe, but that he will not believe. The inability is in the heart, not in his own physical power.

4. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

<sup>1</sup>Prov. ix. 2; John vi. 50, 58.

*Other servants.* This refers to the renewed invitation to the Jews which was made subsequent to the crucifixion, and the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit, when Stephen, Barnabas, Paul, Peter, John, and a great company of preachers, with new power from on high, and capable of a more persuasive eloquence, proclaimed the grand message of the everlasting Gospel. *Tell them, &c.* (See on verse 3.) So tell them that they cannot mistake. From the frequently repeated invitation, we may farther discern God's deep earnestness and fatherly love, who is so bent on helping sinners, and also the high importance of a participation in the Gospel feast.

*Behold, I have prepared my dinner, &c.* The simple manners of the East established the custom of mentioning the principal articles of which an entertainment is to consist. Oxen and fatlings were, in olden times, the noblest entertainment. (Gen. xviii. 7, 8; 1 Kings i. 9.) *My dinner.* In this feast all salvation is the free grace and gift of God, which He, without any co-operation on our part, has prepared through Christ, so that man's business is only to come, receive and enjoy what God's fatherly love presents—pardon of

sin, peace with God, righteousness, life, and blessing for evermore. (Eph. i. 3.) *Come unto the marriage.* You have not something to do, or to pay, or to offer, but *all things are ready*, sacrifice is offered, the price is paid, the gates are open, and all you have to do is to believe God's sincerity in inviting you and joy in giving welcome; accept the invitation, eat, drink, and be happy. All this is true of us as sinners, in accepting the Gospel.

5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: 6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

<sup>1</sup>Gen. xxv. 34; Rom. ii. 4; Heb. ii. 3.

*Made light of it.* They were not simply indifferent, but met the importunate kindness of the king with contemptuous mockery. What a sad statement is here of the reception given by sinners to the Gospel! Men make light of God's love, of Christ's sufferings, of their own peril, if they disregard and treat with contempt alike the promises and threats of the Bible. *Went their ways, &c.* The first is the landed proprietor; the second, the merchant; the first would *enjoy* what he already possesses; the second would *acquire* what as yet is his only in anticipation. (See on Luke xiv. 18, 19.) These two represent the two great divisions of the men of this world. The dangers of *having* and *getting*, though cognate, are yet not at all the same. As these two guests, being troubled by the gravity of their step, were glad to seek refuge from reflection by plunging into the ordinary avocations of life, so the excessive devotion to business, which occupies some men and leaves not a shred either of their hearts or lives for Christ, may be, in many cases, not a primary affection, but the secondary result of another and deeper passion.

*And the remnant, &c.* A portion of the guests carried their opposition beyond supercilious neglect into blood-thirsty enmity. How this description in the parable was realized to the very letter, the Acts of the Apostles give large testimony. Stephen and James were only the first of a large "army of martyrs" who sealed with their blood the testimony they bore to Christ. Evermore the indifference of the world breaks out into enmity against God. The vicissitudes of time scatter

their estates and leave them desolate, or the words of the Gospel reach their consciences and disquiet them, and the apathy they previously felt kindles into intense hatred, and that hatred burns into persecution of the men who are simply doing their duty to their Lord, and trying to do them good.

7. But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth *his* armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

<sup>d</sup>Dan. ix. 26; Luke xix. 27.

From the punitive righteousness of God, marked by the words, *he was wroth*, we see once more how sincere is the gracious call of God. We learn here, also, that the reception of the call is a free act, and that man is not forced to it by God. *His armies*. These may refer to the Roman armies, which, not many years after this, under Vespasian and Titus, besieged Jerusalem, destroyed the city and slaughtered an immense number of the inhabitants, and which, like other nations of old (Isa. x. 5; Jer. xxv. 9), were Jehovah's messengers of wrath against that devoted city. The despisers of God's word shall be visited with terrible punishment. *Their city*. There lies an awful threat in this appellation given to Jerusalem. It is *their* city, not any longer the city of the great King, who owns it no more for His own.

8. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

<sup>e</sup>Chap. x. ii. 13; Acts xiii. 46; Rev. iii. 4.

*The wedding is ready*—it still continues so, notwithstanding that many have slighted the call to it. *Not worthy*. Their unworthiness consisted in their rejection of the invitation. They were in such a state of mind that they could not receive the grace offered them. Here Divine grace is justified, and all guilt thrown back upon the guests (Acts xiii. 46, 47), so that not even the servants inviting them are partakers in it. The worthiness of those who found a place at the festival, consisted only in their acceptance of the invitation.

9. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

The king took his servants into his counsel. They had suffered in his cause, and he will not conceal from them what he is about to do. *Highways*, that is, the nooks and lanes, the hedges, ditches and bye roads, where beggars and outcasts of society

are. When those who had a prescriptive right to appear at court had, by their perversity, excluded themselves, the king, in his sovereignty, extended the invitation generally to the common people. *As many as ye shall find*, &c. Obviously this means the calling of the Gentiles—the changing of the outward aspect of the kingdom of God among men, just as it is said in chapter xxi. 43. The national pride of Israel is here primarily aimed at. (Compare Matt. viii. 10–12, of which this parable is only the ample unfolding.)

10. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

<sup>f</sup>Chap. xiii. 33, 47.

*Both bad and good*. The servants made no distinction; they swept the streets to fill the royal halls. The invitation to the marriage-supper of the Lamb is the same to all *kinds* as well as conditions of men; those who are outwardly moral and those who are not; those, like Nathaniel, or Cornelius, or the ruler of Capernaum, may be, in one sense called the "*good*," and those, like the woman who was a sinner, may be in the same sense called the "*bad*." Apart from Christ, and prior to regeneration, the distinction between bad and good is only an earthly thing: in God's sight and in prospect of the judgment, there is none good, no not one. It is not the man's goodness that recommends him to God's favor: the worst is welcome through the blood of Christ, and the best is rejected if he approach by any other way.

*The wedding was furnished with guests*. (Isa. liii. 12; John xi. 52, xii. 24.) Here the parable becomes logically complete. Up to this point it repeats and extends the warnings previously given regarding the spiritual privileges which the Jews enjoyed and abused, the judgments which had been and still would be poured out upon the nation, and the successful proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles, when the natural seed of Abraham should have, in rebellious unbelief, rejected the offers of their Lord. It is now for those who have accepted the invitation to the Gospel-feast, with an earnest warning also for them. There are, indeed, *here*, two parables, and in their union and relation they resemble the two seed-stones which are

sometimes found within one fruit, attached to each other, and wrapped in the same envelope, but possessing each its own separate organization, and its own independent germ of life.

11. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment :  
12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless.

<sup>a</sup>2 Cor. v. 3; Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10, 12; Rev. iii. 4, xvi. 15, xix. 8.

*To see the guests.* This shall be done at the last judgment. Every one shall then be made manifest before the world according to his internal condition. *Had not on, &c.* The wedding garment was something conspicuous and distinctive; it was a significant badge of a man's loyalty, and the want of it indicated disloyalty. In the parable it is taken for granted that wedding garments were provided for the guests, which made the conduct of the man without one altogether inexcusable. *Friend*—"companion." It is a kind word. *How camest, &c.* Astonishment is expressed at this. At the judgment, there will not be the stern, terrible blaze of revealed majesty, as it were, bearing the unrighteous man down to destruction, but it shall be the still, small voice of awakened conscience. *Wedding garment.* This includes both faith and love as one. Rather, it is what comprises both faith and love, what implies and demands them both, but which is higher than both—the righteousness of Christ "unto all, and upon all them that believe," and "who walk in love." (See Rom. xiii. 14; Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 22, vi. 13-16; 1 Thess. v. 8.) *Speechless.* The man had nothing to say. His silence shows that the only reason why he had not on a wedding garment was, simply, because he thought his own dress, in all probability mean and sordid, good enough for the royal presence. The sinner who is destitute of Christ's righteousness at last, will be rendered speechless by the unutterable inward horror that he has sinned away his own mercies.

13. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.  
<sup>b</sup>Chap. viii. 12.

*The servants.* he ministering attendants here, who are different, both in name and office, from the servants who invited and brought in the guests, can be no other

than the angels. (Matt. xiii. 41, 49; Luke xix. 24.) *Bind him hand and foot*—the sign of the helplessness to which, in a moment, every proud striver against God is reduced. The *hands*, by the aid of which resistance, the *feet*, by whose help escape might have been meditated, are alike deprived of all power and motion. (Acts xxi. 11.) *Take him away*—from the banquet-hall. Here is implied the sinner's exclusion from the Church now glorious and triumphant in heaven.

*Cast him into outer darkness*—the out-door darkness. The guilty guest in the parable is thrown from the splendor of the banquet into the horrors of the midnight street. The penalty is not merely privative—not only the loss of good, but, also, the presence of evil. (See on chap. viii. 12.) *There shall be weeping, &c.* What a dreadful expression! How unavailing will be their tears of anguish, and how impotent the gnashing or grating of teeth, when the persons here represented become outcasts of God's kingdom! (See on chap. viii. 12.) We cannot tell in detail what the condition of the finally outcast will be, and what will be the constituents of their suffering. All that our Lord has told us is, that the condition of the lost is in outer darkness, with all its horrors. He has covered it from our sight. In referring to the dismal retribution of the wicked, He often warns us that they shall be cast away, but He never tells us the particulars of their torments. For teachings about this terror, let us listen to His Word; for safety from it, let us hide in His bosom.

14. For many are called, but few are chosen.

The scope of the parable gives this proverbial saying here, this sense: Many are invited to the blessings and privileges of the Gospel-feast, but comparatively few are real participants of the grace of God; while the singling out of only *one* without the wedding garment, is meant, to make *each man* look well to himself and his own hope. On the other hand, our Lord gives the sad intimation that, "many are called, but few chosen," to show that in the Gentile day of grace, as well as the Jewish, it is after all but a small remnant who really accept of God's invitation of mercy at all.

(Chap. vii. 13, 14. See on chap. xix. 30, xx. 16.)

15. ¶ Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. 16. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. 17. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? 18. But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19. Shew me the tribute-money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21. They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God, the things that are God's. 22. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

Mark xii. 13; Luke xx. 20. \*Chap. xvii. 25; Rom. xiii. 7.

*Took counsel*—held a consultation. *Entangle*, &c. They aimed to involve Him in trouble on that very delicate but true distinction, that subsists between the jurisdiction of Cæsar and the jurisdiction of God; or, rather, they attempted to bring Him into difficulty, either with the crowd who applauded Him, or with the Herodians, and through them with the Idumean, who occupied the throne at that time as the representative of Cæsar. If Jesus had said, It is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, the Jews would have all risen up against Him. If He had said, No, Herod would have accused Him of treason. *Their disciples*—probably young and zealous scholars in that hardening school. *With the Herodians*. These were a political party who had espoused the cause of the Romans, and were staunch supporters of their authority. In Luke (xx. 20), these willing tools are called “spies,” which should feign themselves just (or righteous) men, “that they might take hold of His words,” &c. The Herodians heartily hated the Pharisees, because the Pharisees quarreled with the government of the civil power; and the Pharisees as heartily hated the Herodians, because they regarded the government of Rome as superior to the ecclesiastical power. Yet, when they wanted to destroy Jesus, they merged their internal feuds into one current of hostility to the Son of God. *Master*; or teacher. This was an empty compliment.

*We know*: they speak the truth, though this was done with a most false intention. *True*. Truthful, upright. *Way of God*, i. e., the doctrines and precepts which God approves. *In truth*—in accordance with truth. *Neither carest*, &c.—art not afraid

of, nor showest partiality to any man, not even Herod himself. 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.

*Is it lawful? i. e.*, may we do this without a breach of our duty to God? They affected great conscientiousness. *Tribute* (xvii. 24.) The annual poll-tax of a denarius upon every person by the Roman emperor. *Tiberius Cæsar* was at this time emperor. *Tempt ye me*—try me by such an ensnaring question. *Hypocrites*. He opposes the depth of His wisdom to the depth of their malice, and manifests it, 1. by unmasking them, and showing that He knew the very secrets of their hearts, and, 2. by not attempting to discuss the question at large, but setting it in a way to which none could honestly object.

*Tribute-money*. (See on verse 17.) A penny—the denarius, a Roman silver coin, the principal money at that time. 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. *Whose is this image*, &c. Our Lord, of course, knew whose effigy and inscription it bore, but He made the inquirers answer to their own confusion. The Jewish doctors themselves taught, that to admit the impression and inscription of any prince on their current coin, involved an acknowledgment of their subjection to him.

*Render therefore*, &c. They had just confessed that Cæsar exercised temporal authority over them. They used the money which Cæsar had coined, thus admitting that they were under his government. This admission was the stronger because, not *Tiberius*, but the official title *Cæsar* was given, showing that not a person, but a principle was involved. Let them, therefore, render unto him his dues. If they consented to receive the gift of peace and order from Cæsar, they must consent to render the payment of the expenses of his government.

*The things which are Cæsar's*. What are 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 brings it under their control respectively. "Among the peculiar qualities of our holy religion," says *Paley*, "is to be reckoned its complete abstraction from all views of civil policy. Christianity, while it declines every question relating to particular forms of government, is alike friendly to them all, by tending to make men virtuous, and, therefore, easier to be governed; by stating obedience to government in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience; by inducing dispositions favorable to public tranquility, and by recommending prayers for communities and governors of every description, with a solicitude and fervency pro-

portioned to the influence they possess upon human happiness."

*And unto God the things that are 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 pretence of doing service to God. Honor, love, obedience, faith, fear, prayer, spiritual worship, were payments which even these Pharisees and Herodians might daily make, and payments with which the Roman government did not interfere. Such payments Jesus directed them to make. We can learn how to render to every one his own, by saying, "Show me the coin." As we see the image and superscription of God on the Sabbath, for example, we can easily decide whether that day is to be used for earthly activity or for participation in the sweet services of the sanctuary. If it be sinful not to render unto men the things which belong to men, how much *more* sinful is it not to render unto God the things that belong to God! Yet, it is in this point, alas! that we are most negligent. *And went their way*. Our Lord's reply commanded the admiration of His very tempters. Well might they be astonished. It was an extrication of Himself from the toils they had spread so artfully for Him that escape seemed to them impossible. By His answer, *Cæsar* is satisfied, for he got *his own* to the uttermost farthing. *God* is glorified, His honor, is in every respect, secured. The *Pharisees* cannot complain (Luke xx. 26), for Christ's 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. (Luke xx. 26.)

23. ¶ The same day came to him the "Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24. Saying, Master, "Moses said, if a man die, having no

children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother. 26. Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27. And last of all the woman died also. 28. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

Mark xii. 18; Luke xx. 27. =Acts xxiii. 8. =Deut. xxv. 5, 6.

The attempt of the Pharisees to entice the Saviour within the sphere of the controversy between politics and religion having entirely miscarried, another class of His enemies now seek to allure Him upon another not less dangerous territory. *Sadducees*. This Jewish sect taught, among other things, that God was not to be served from mercenary motives, that there were no future rewards and punishments appointed unto men, and, consequently, no world of retribution. Their intention is to show, from Moses, that the doctrine of the resurrection involves an inexplicable mystery. *Saying, Master, &c.* They propose to Jesus a difficulty that would grow out of their law, if the relations which it prescribes were to be extended beyond the grave. The law referred to is found Deut. xxv. 5, 6. *Seven brethren*. It is very likely that the Sadducees increased the number, merely to make the question the more difficult.

*In the resurrection whose wife, &c.* With their gross, materialistic views, they thought that if there *was* any future state, it must resemble the present, and assumed it to be a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection, that every man's wife should be restored to him. How was this confusion to be settled? This method of arguing by *insinuations, from imagined difficulties, against authenticated revelation, or even stubborn facts*, forms a species of logic for which infidels, ancient and modern, have shown a peculiar predilection, and indeed it is the best method which can be taken of perplexing weak minds, and amusing superficial inquirers. There is great comfort in the thought that truth must triumph. Infidelity may, from time to time, make a stir in the world, but can produce no lasting impression. The great evidences of Christianity remain, like the Pyramids, unshaken and unmoved.

29. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

*Do err, &c., that is, "ye deceive your-*

*selves by assuming a false hypothesis," namely, that if there be a future state it must be like the present, and by your ignorance of the true sense of the Scriptures, and not considering the omnipotence of God. Unbelief has always two springs: 1. The want of historic faith; 2. The want of personal faith. These Sadducees did not perceive the Divine, the spiritual in the Scriptures (1 Cor. ii. 14), hence their ignorance of the Scriptural doctrine of the resurrection. Neither did they understand the power of God, inasmuch as they put no trust in His power over death, in His power to raise the dead: and hence they had no ability to conceive of or anticipate the glorification of the present body into a higher state, into a life in which present sexual relations should no longer subsist. The numerous and multiform objections advanced against the resurrection, by the opponents of the doctrine, are all, when analyzed, found to result from not knowing the power of God. He who weighs the dust of the earth in a balance, and whose omniscient eye surveys all things, can easily gather up the dust of those who sleep in Jesus, to become spiritual bodies, bearing the image of the heavenly. (See 1 Cor. xv. 35-54.)*

30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.—1 John iii. 2.

*Neither marry.* Spoken of males. *Given in marriage.* Spoken of females, with reference to the Oriental custom, according to which fathers gave their daughters into marriage. 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 which they have sustained, the one to the other, as man and wife, shall have ceased; when all shall be perfectly holy, and perfectly happy. *As the angels.* 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. (See 1 Cor. xv. 42, &c.)

31. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32. *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*  
Ex. iii. 6, 16; Mark xii. 26; Luke xx. 37; Acts vii. 32; Heb. xi. 16.

Our Lord, instead of quoting for His purpose of proving the resurrection, the apparently plainer passages in the prophetic writings (such as Isa. xxvi. 9; Ezek. xxxvii; Dan. xii. 2), refers to a word spoken by God Himself, and recorded in Ex. iii. 15—probably because the Sadducees placed the Pentateuch above all other writings of the Old Testament. He 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 hundred years, to exist among mortals. Hence it is said, not “I was their God,” but, “I am.” A being who is elevated enough to have a true, personal, 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.

Our Lord, in this argument, does not *directly* prove the resurrection of the body distinctively from the immortality of the soul, because He is arguing with those who hold the former to be included in, and inseparably identified with, the latter. To prove one, therefore, is to prove both. A future *personal* existence, where Abraham is Abraham still, involves a resurrection of the dead. *But of the living.* The patriarchs here mentioned, were living in God’s presence, although they had long departed this life. He was their God, the author of their continued existence and enjoyments, as He was when they lived on earth.

33. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.—Chap. vii. 28.

Our Lord reanimated the dead letter of the Old Testament in such a way as to astonish their minds and elevate their hearts. He poured the sense of immortality upon their spirit from the pages that had by the lifeless teachings of their masters contained the sentence of death.

34. ¶ But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.—Mark xii. 28.

*Had heard.* Whether the Pharisees were present, mixed up with the crowds, or absent, so that they learned what had taken place through their spies, does not appear. *Sadducees to silence.* (See on verse 15.) *They were gathered together*—they met together with one accord, or for the same purpose, *i. e.* to ensnare Jesus in His discourse. Though previously defeated, they determined to make another effort.

35. Then one of them, *which was a lawyer*, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, 36. *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*—Luke x. 28:

*One of them*, who seems to have been of their party, and knew, too, their plots and plans. *A lawyer.* He was one of the Mosaic jurists, whose special province was the interpretation of the law. *Tempting him*, that is, trying Him; not, however, with a bad intention, but with the purpose of yielding where truth required. (See Mark xii. 28.) *Which is the great commandment in the law?* The reference was to the five books of Moses, which contained the ceremonial laws and the moral. This question involved a matter of no little controversy among the Jewish doctors, as involving the comparative importance of different precepts, some maintaining the pre-eminence of one, some of another. Some said “sacrifices;” some “circumcision;” some “the law of the Sabbath;” some “the law of meats, washings, phylacteries,” &c. Only while they distinguished the Divine precepts (of which they numbered 613) into *great* and *small*, they constantly gave the preference to the *ceremonial* ones.

37. Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.* 38. *This is the first and great commandment.*—Deut. vi. 5, x. 12, xxx. 6; Luke x. 27.

Our Lord’s answer is in a strain of respect very different from what He showed to cavillers. (See chap. vii. 6.) *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, i. e.*, Jehovah, the self-existent One, who hast revealed Himself as the “I AM,” and there is “none else,” who, though by His name *JEHOVAH*, apparently at an unapproachable distance from His finite creatures, yet bears to *thee* a real and definite relationship, out of which arises *His claim* and thy duty of *love*. By this love we are to understand the unqualified surrender of our whole being to God. Of such a love man is

capable, though not by his own strength, but by Divine grace, because he finds in God alone all his wants fully and everlastingly satisfied. Our Lord, by calling the commandment to love God supremely, *the first and great commandment*, does evidently not design to represent it as one out of many, though greater in degree than others. On the contrary, the love of God is *the* commandment, and the whole law, with all its injunctions and prohibitions, is only a development of this one commandment. Whether the object of it is considered, or the manner in which it is to be observed, or its being the principle from whence all the duties and actions of men should flow, and the end to which all are to be referred, it is the first command in order of nature, time, dignity, and causality.

30. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40. Lev. xix. 18; chap. xix. 19; Mark xii. 31, Luke x. 27; Rom. xiii. 9; Gal. v. 14, Isa. ii. 8.

*Second is like unto it*, in spirit—in being founded in love, like in being in fact included in the first. Yet as the object of love, in the latter case, is so infinitely below that of the former, it is to be regarded of secondary rank. *Neighbour*. (See on verse 43.) *As thyself*. The law here laid down, does not require that we neglect our interests for those of another, or share our necessary means of subsistence, with every chance comer, but it is opposed to selfishness, and to a cold-hearted indifference to the wants of others. It demands the exercise of charity in behalf of the destitute and suffering, and teaches us to sympathize in all the griefs and afflictions of our fellow-men, so far as the scope of our observation and influence may extend. As *sincerely* as ourselves, we are to love all mankind, and with the same readiness to do and suffer for them, as we should reasonably desire them to show to us. (See on xix. 19.)

Leighton says: "Seems it not rather a *contrary* commandment? Whereas in the former the whole stream of LOVE is directed in one undivided current toward God, this second commandment seems to cut out a new channel for it, and turn a great part of it to men, 'thy neighbor as thyself.' No, they are not contrary, if we

take them right; yea, they do not only agree, but are inseparable. They do not divide our love, but set it in its right course; first, wholly to God as the sovereign good, and then back from Him according to His own will, it is derived downward to our neighbor. For then only do we love both ourselves and others aright, when we make our love to Him the reason and rule of both."

40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.—Chap. vii. 12; 1 Tim. i. 5.

*These two commandments*. The first is a comprehensive epitome of the first four commandments of the decalogue; the second, of the last six commandments. *Hang all the law and the prophets*. The spirit and intent of the Scriptures is to promote love to God and man, the love which the law required, and the *prophets* were given to enforce and predict. (Rom. xiii. 10; 1 John iv. 20. See on chap. vii. 12, v. 17.) *These two* contain the substance or abridgement of all the moral and religious duties contained in the law and the prophets. They are like the first and last links of a chain, all the intermediate ones depend on them. How simple are these two rules, and yet how comprehensive! How soon the words are repeated, and yet how much they contain! How humbling and condemning they are! How much they prove our daily need of mercy and the precious blood of atonement! Happy would it be for the world if these rules were more known and practiced.

41. ¶ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42. Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.—Mark xii. 35; Luke xx. 41.

Our Lord having answered the three questions successively proposed to Him, now in His turn puts a question to the Pharisees, the object of which is to show to them how far their notions of the Messiah's dignity fell short of the truth, and also to prove His Divinity. Let us make a practical use of the solemn question, "What think ye of Christ?" What do we think of His Person and His offices? of His life, His death for us on the cross, His resurrection, ascension, and intercession at the right hand of God? Have we tasted that He is gracious? Have we laid hold on Him by faith? Have we found by experience that He is precious to our souls?

Can we truly say He is my Redeemer and my Saviour, my Shepherd, and my Friend? We should never rest until we can give a satisfactory answer to these serious inquiries. It will not profit us to read about Christ, if we are not joined to Him by living faith.

*Whose son is he?* The Saviour thus gave them an opportunity of acknowledging Him as Messiah. The doctrine of the Divine Unity (verse 37), is illustrated by that of the Trinity. *Of David.* Human reason more easily accepts moderate views of Christ, than those which are either more humble or more glorious.

43. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, 44. The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? 45. If David then called him Lord, how is he his son? <sup>a</sup>Ps. cx. 1; Acts ii. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5; Heb. i. 13, x. 12, 13.

*How then, i. e. in what sense, doth David call him, i. e. the Messiah, Lord? 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. Rest, glory and an almighty power in heaven and on earth to form the kingdom of God, are here denoted. This ought to be the continual object of our adoration, our joy and our confidence.

*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. All wicked men, the fallen angels, and death itself, are included in the word *enemies*. It is not implied in these words that the Messiah's royal state will cease when the

result stated has been reached. *If David then call him Lord, how is he 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. Jesus might have quoted many other Old Testament passages which prove the Divinity of the Messiah, such as Mi. v. 1; Ps. xlv. 7, 8; Mal. iii. 1; Isa. vii. 14, ix. 5; Jer. xxiii. 6. But He quotes the passage which speaks of the Messiah as David's Son and David's Lord at the same time, consequently as God and man in one person.

46. <sup>b</sup>And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions. <sup>c</sup>Mark xii. 34: Luke xx. 40.

*No man was able, &c.* "From whence it is evident," says an old writer, "that the Jews of old, even the Pharisees, the most accurate and skillful among them, did interpret this Psalm (cx.) of the *Messias*: for if they had conceived the prophecy belonged either to Abraham or David, or any other, they doubtless would have answered our Saviour that this belonged to the Son of David." *Neither durst, &c.* No one of the scribes, the Pharisees, or the Sadducees, durst ask him any question for the purpose of *tempting* Him or entangling Him, all feeling that they were not a match for Him, and that it was vain to enter the lists with Him. See the effect of Divine wisdom! What an awfulness there is about it! These wicked men were not afraid of Christ's earthly power. Yet in spite of themselves they could not help feeling awe. They were rebuked before Him. Vice quails before the majesty of virtue.

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1. What is said of the parable of the "king?" 2. Why did he send forth his servants? 3. Why did he send forth "other servants?" 4. How was their invitation received? 5. What was the result? 6. For what purpose did the Pharisees take counsel? 7. How did they proceed? 8. Explain Christ's reply to their question. 9. What did the Sadducees ask Him? 10. How did He dispose of their objection? 11. What did the lawyer ask Jesus? 12. State our Lord's answer? 13. What did Christ ask the Pharisees? 14. What was their reply? 15. How did Jesus meet it? 16. What was the effect of His answer?

## CHAPTER XXIII.

<sup>1</sup> Christ admonisheth the people to follow the good doctrine, not the evil examples of the scribes and Pharisees. <sup>5</sup> His disciples must beware of their ambition. <sup>13</sup> He denounceth eight woes against their hypocrisy and blindness: <sup>31</sup> and prophesieth of the destruction of Jerusalem.

WHEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: <sup>3</sup> All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

<sup>a</sup>Neh. viii. 4, 8; Mal. ii. 7; Mark xii. 38; Luke xx. 45. <sup>b</sup>Rom. ii. 19, &c.

The multitude—the common people, who had hailed with acclamations His advent into the city. His disciples, more especially the Apostles and other disciples, who had followed Him from Galilee. There were, doubtless, many of the scribes and Pharisees present, when our Lord pronounced the terrible woes which follow (beginning at verse 13), but they either feared to interrupt Him, or were silent through hope that in the vehemence of His feelings, He would say something which they could turn against Him. *Scribes and Pharisees*, that is, those of the latter class who were at the same time scribes. *Sit*. The Jewish teachers stood to read, but sat to expound the Scriptures. *In Moses' seat, i. e.*, as interpreters of the law given by Moses.

All therefore, &c. As long as the scribes occupied the place of Moses, were clothed with his authority, and spoke forth his words, not their own—those words, because they were true, not because they were uttered by them who officially proclaimed them, the people were called upon to keep and do. *But do not, &c.* Our Lord warns the people against the too common practice of rejecting truth and duty, because of the inconsistent lives of the teachers. *For they say, &c.* What could be more pitiable than a Teacher, to imitate whom is ruin—to refuse to follow whom is salvation.

<sup>4</sup> For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. <sup>c</sup>Luke xi. 46; Acts xv. 10; Gal. vi. 13.

The scribes and Pharisees, by strictness and harshness in enforcing the precepts of Moses, though in respect to outward ceremonial observances, rather than to piety of heart, imposed heavy burdens on others, but kept themselves from such burdensome obedience, so that, while others were made to carry a load that required all their strength, they would not take a burden that could be moved with their finger; nor did

they present those cheering encouragements which were needed, and which the Old Testament afforded to those who truly desired to serve God. (See Rom. ii. 17–24.) Teachers who press that upon others, which they neither believe nor do themselves, are like bells that call others to church but hang out of it themselves, or like direction posts that point the way to others but stand still themselves.

<sup>5</sup> But call their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, <sup>6</sup> And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

<sup>d</sup>Chap. vi. 1, 2, 5, 16. <sup>e</sup>Num. xv. 38; Deut. vi. 8 and xxii. 12; Prov. iii. 3. <sup>f</sup>Mark xii. 38, 39; Luke xi. 43 and xx. 46.

*To be seen of men.* They have but one motive—human applause. *Phylacteries*—"strips of parchment, on which were written four passages of Scripture (Ex. xiii. 2–10, 11–17; Deut. vi. 4–9, 13–22) in an ink prepared for the purpose. They were then rolled up in a case of black calf-skin, which was attached to a stiffer piece of leather, having a thong one finger broad and one and a half cubits long. They were placed at the bend of the left arm, and after the thong had made a little knot in the shape of the letter" [*Yodh*, the tenth letter in the Hebrew alphabet] "it was wound round the arm in a spiral line, which ended at the top of the middle finger. . . . They were also worn on the forehead."

*Garments.* 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. *And love, &c.* There was nothing wrong in the scribes occupying the seats set apart for them, or receiving marks of respect and deference in places of public concourse; but to "love" these things, to court them, 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.) *Rabbi, Rabbi.* This is a Hebrew word, signifying a great one. It was an honorary title given to the Jewish teach-

ers, much like our *doctor, teacher*. It was doubled for the sake of greater emphasis. These rabbis were looked up to as infallible oracles in religious matters, and usurped not only the place of the law, but of God himself.

8. <sup>a</sup>But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. James iii. 1; see 2 Cor. i. 24; 1 Peter v. 3.

*For one is your Master, or, Teacher.* Here is the ground of the prohibition. There was a special reason for this prohibition in the case of the scribes against which it was aimed, for *Rabbi* was not with them a mere title of literary or theological attainments; they claimed the prerogative of supreme jurisdiction in all religious matters, imposing whatever rites, forms or ceremonies they pleased, and lording it over the consciences of the common people, and, hence, with them it was a title of spiritual rank and dignity, which no man had a right to assume. Some excellent men, as *Albert Barnes*, in his "Notes on the Gospels," consider the modern title of Doctor of Divinity as condemned by the spirit of these words. It is certain that the minister who schemes for the purpose of obtaining it, gives humiliating proof of having, in that respect, the spirit of the men who *loved* to be called Rabbi. *All ye are brethren*—all substantially equal; none, by office or precedence, nearer to God than another. Nothing is here said about Peter having authority over the rest. If he *had* such authority, it would have been natural and necessary now to mention and adjust it.

9. And call no man your father upon the earth: <sup>b</sup>for one is your Father, which is in heaven.—<sup>b</sup>Mal. i. 6.

The titles, *teacher, father, master*, are prohibited by our Lord with reference to their hierarchical sense and use, but not absolutely, as is evident from the harmless and proper use of the word father. We are not to have regard to human authority in matters of faith or in doctrines of religion. We are to acknowledge no man as our father in spiritual things, so as to have "dominion over our faith," for we have but one such father, even our *Father, which is in heaven*. The word *Pope* signifies father. If ever, in the history of men, the title *father* has been assumed in express transgression of Christ's command, it is

in his case. This may be regarded as a warning against that itch for ecclesiastical superiority which has been the bane and the scandal of Christ's ministers in every age.

10. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

The Greek word for *master* here means a leader of a school or party, whom his followers have to obey *implicitly*. Against setting up any such party leader, Paul warns the Corinthians. (1 Cor. i. 12.) No one shall assume the position of master in the Church of Christ. He is the only Master, and all the members of the New Testament Church are to sustain a real life-union with the one Head of the Church, and the relationship of brethren to one another. All these titles are forbidden to Christ's disciples in the sense in which they were applied to the scribes, but not as titles of respect to our superiors in age, influence and acquirements.

11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.—Chap. xx. 26; 27.

"Humility and the spirit of usefulness compose the true dignity to which you ought to aspire. Let greatness be shown among you by your cherishing deep humility and regard for the good of others." *Baxter* well says, "church *greatness* consists in being *greatly* serviceable." *Shall be, i. e.*, let him be. (See on chap. xx. 26.)

12. <sup>a</sup>And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

<sup>b</sup>Job xxii. 29; Prov. xv. 33 and xxix. 33; Luke xiv. 11 and xviii. 14; Isa. iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 5.

The way to arrive at the highest degree of dignity in the sight of God is, by being willing to become the servant of all. Jesus was exalted because He took on Him the form of a servant. Even so will God, according to this universal law, exalt every one in Christ, who after the same manner exalts himself. The sentiment of this saying of our Lord occurs at least ten times in the Evangelists. This repetition is a striking proof of the Christian grace of humility. (1 Peter v. 5.) Let us seek that blessed grace day by day. None is so beautiful, however much despised by the world. None is such an evidence of saving faith and true conversion to God.

13. ¶ But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.—Luke xi. 52.

*Woe* is a word of solemn denunciation of punishment. As here uttered, it implies that calamities of the most awful nature are impending over its guilty objects from the Divine justice. *Pharisees*, the name of the sect; *scribes*, of the profession. *Hypocrites*—dissemblers, having a mere show of piety. *For ye shut up, &c.* By their false views, they excluded themselves from the blessings of the new and better economy, and so far as these views prevailed, they prevented others from participating in these blessings. They thus became the authors of destruction, both to themselves and to others. The sin here denounced 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; of the 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.

14. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

<sup>a</sup>Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47; 2 Tim. iii. 6; Tit. i. 11.

*Woe.* (See on verse 13.) *Devour, &c.* 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. *Long prayer.* 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 *pretence*—"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. There will be degrees of condemnation and misery in hell. However feeble our faith, hope, love and obedience may be, let us see to it that they are real, genuine and sincere. God requires "truth in the inward parts." The very first piece of Christian armor recommended by Paul is "truth." (Eph. vi. 10.)

15. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

*Woe, &c.* (See on verse 13.) *Compass,*

&c. A proverbial expression, meaning, ye make untiring efforts. But we may suppose that missionary journeys were made by the Jews for the purpose mentioned, and that a proselyting impulse generally drove them through the world. *Proselyte*, literally, a *stranger*, or *foreigner*; one who is come from his own people and country to sojourn with another. Here the word is applied to a convert from Paganism to Judaism. *Twofold more, &c.*, condemned for the hypocrisy he would learn to practice, both by the religion he left and that he embraced. The proselytes did not only disbelieve Christ's doctrine, but were abundantly more blasphemous against Him than the Jews themselves, endeavoring to torment and cut off the Christians wherever they could, they being in this the instruments of the scribes and Pharisees. *Children of hell*—equivalent to "worthy of hell" in phrases of this kind, as 2 Sam. xii. 5, where the phrase, translated "*shall surely die,*" is, in the original, "*is a son of death,*" and John xvii. 12, where Judas is called "*the son of perdition.*"

16. *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, 'Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!'*—Chap. xv. 14, verse 24.

*Blind guides.* He had previously styled them *hypocrites*, from their personal character; now He gives them another title, respecting their influence upon others. *Whosoever shall swear, &c.* The Jews divided oaths into great (such as, by God and Corban) and small, (which might be violated without guilt) such as, by the temple, altar, &c. (See on chap. v. 33.) *By the temple, it is nothing*—it has no significance and imposes no obligation. *By the gold of the temple*, the golden ornaments or utensils of the temple, or, most probably, at least chiefly, the money contained in the treasury, gathered from the yearly tax for the support of the temple (see xvii. 24), from the payment of vows and from voluntary donations. *He is a debtor*—bound to observe the oath. So that these money lovers, in swearing by the temple *treasure*, swore their most binding oath by their own god. The covetous man still gives preference to the object of his lust; *gold* has still the first place in his heart. A



man is to be suspected when he recommends those good works most, from which he receives most advantages.

17. *Ye fools and blind; for whether is greater, the gold, for the temple that sanctifieth the gold?*

<sup>1</sup>Ex. xxx. 29.

*Fools and blind.* They sinned even against common sense, which determines that that, from which another thing derives its character, must more have that character itself. *Sanctifieth the gold*—renders the gold deposit sacred.

18. And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

*The altar . . . . the gift.* The words are general in their application, and not to be limited to any one altar or gift. *It is nothing.* (See on verse 16.) *By the gift.* The origin of this error was the self-righteousness of the offerers. They esteemed their own gifts more highly than the Divine institution. *He is guilty, i. e.,* bound to fulfil his oath. The word in the original is the same as the one translated, *he is a debtor*, in verse 16.

19. *Ye fools and blind; for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?*

<sup>2</sup>Ex. xxix. 37.

*The gift.* The offering made to God, so called because it was devoted or given to Him. (See on verse 17.)

20. Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 22. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

<sup>1</sup>1 Kings viii. 13; <sup>2</sup>2 Chron. vi. 2; <sup>3</sup>Ps. xxvi. 8, cxxxii. 14. <sup>4</sup>Ps. xl. 4; chap. v. 34; Acts vii. 49.

For, as the less is contained in the greater, so in the oath which is sworn by the temple and the altar, is contained the oath by the gold and the gift. Moreover, since no inanimate thing can be supposed to be the witness of an oath, he who swears by the altar, by the temple, or by heaven itself, must be understood as swearing by Him to whom all these belong. And thus, on quite another ground, our Saviour convicts the Pharisees of blindness. *Swear by the temple.* We expect to hear "he sweareth also by the gold of the temple." But this is self-understood, and therefore Christ returns back to the Lord of the temple, who makes the temple what it is, and makes heaven, the great temple, what it is. The oath has its significance generally in this, and in this only, that it is a confirmation by God, a declaration uttered

as before God. *Him that dwelleth therein.* That is, God. The temple was His house, His dwelling. In the first, or Solomon's temple, He dwelt between the cherubims, in the most holy place. He manifested Himself there by a visible symbol, the cloud of glory, resting on the mercy-seat. (1 Kings viii. 10; Ps. lxxx. 1.) *By heaven.* Our Lord had before expressly forbidden all such oaths as these (chap. v. 34), and He here shows it is vain to attempt to distinguish them from each other, as to their effects in binding the conscience.

23. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

<sup>1</sup>Luke xi. 42. <sup>2</sup>1 Sam. xv. 22; <sup>3</sup>Hos. vi. 6; <sup>4</sup>Mic. vi. 8; chap. ix. 13; xii. 7.

*Woe* (see on verse 13). *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. (Numb. xviii. 21.) *Mint, anise, &c.* The herbs here specified correspond mainly to those of the same name in Europe and America, *anise* being the aromatic plant by us called dill, and *cummin*, corresponding to the caraway, and used by the Orientals as a condiment. But, whilst strict in these little matters, these Pharisaic scribes were very loose in great matters—they omitted, or passed over *the weightier matters of the law.* They neglected, they transgressed the great laws of religion and morality.

*Judgment*, is just equivalent to the discharge of duties according to the principles of righteousness or justice. *Mercy*—kindness. *Faith.* We have no doubt that a belief of the Gospel of Christ, even such a one as is connected with salvation, is required by the moral law, and is one of its most weighty matters, for the moral law requires love to God with all the heart, and love to God would certainly lead us to embrace any revelation which He should make of Himself, such a revelation especially in which the glory of God is provided for in the highest degree. But the term *faith here*, we consider synonymous with *fidelity* or *veracity*, being ranked with *judgment* and *mercy*, which are duties

of the second table. *These, i. e.,* the great duties of morality and religion, *ought ye to have done*—ought to have been first attended to, while at the same time, ye ought not to leave undone the paying tithes of mint, &c., which are duties too, though of a far inferior order. (See Mic. vi. 6, 8.)

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 enthusiastic 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.

24. *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

*Blind guides.* (See on verse 16.) *Strain, &c.* It should be “strain out a gnat.” In southern countries gnats swarm, and therefore may easily fall into wine vessels, and are sometimes bred in them. Passing the liquor through a strainer that no gnat or part of one might remain, grew into a proverb for exactness about little matters. The meaning is, “if there is an omission in paying tithes of mint and anise and cummin, you are most excited, and would seem to be angels of heaven, so shocked are you that the law should be broken even in the most minute jot, but crimes, provided they be committed by a Pharisee, are, in your mind, so trivial that of you it is strictly true that while you “strain out a gnat, you swallow a camel.”

25. *Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

\*Mark vii. 4; Luke xi. 39.

*Woe unto you, &c.* (See on verse 13.) *Make clean, &c.* The figure here is that of a person who takes great care to make the outside of the vessel 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 implied a satisfac-

tion with inward corruption, only so that the exterior is fair and plausible.

*But within, &c.* The figure which began with “the outside of the cup” 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.” *Full*, literally, *loaded*. *Extortion* is the same word rendered “ravening” in Luke xi. 39. *Excess*. The word so rendered is a general term for excess. Luke says “wickedness.” The meaning is, that though they took much pains to appear well, yet they obtained a living by extortion and wickedness. These miserable men procured unjustly what they used intemperately. No wonder tables so furnished proved a snare, as many find by sad experience. Thus luxury furnishes fraud, while it feeds disease with the fruits of injustice.

26. *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

\*Isa. iv. 7; Jer. iv. 14, xiii. 27; Ezek. xviii. 31; Luke vi. 45; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Heb. x. 22; James iv. 8.

*Cleanse, &c.*—the inside. Sanctify thy enjoyment by righteousness and temperance. *That the outside, &c.* 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.

27. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 28. *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

†Luke xi. 44; Acts xxiii. 3.

*Whited sepulchres.* Deeply imbedded among the rank grass, the tombs about Jerusalem were often invisible, so that persons were apt to stumble over them, and thereby contract ceremonial uncleanness. As, however, such an occurrence would have been attended with the greatest inconvenience to the multitudes who crowded the city during the celebration of the national festivals, it was an annual practice to have the grass cleared away, and the stones white-washed. The general sentiment is, that those persons are peculiarly criminal and dangerous, who, while they are under the influence of the most depraved principles, yet maintain a decent

exterior, and that, however they may impose on their fellow-men, they are regarded with disapprobation, and will, if they repent not, be visited with punishment by Him who, as He searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men, all things being naked and open before Him, cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.

29. <sup>a</sup>Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, <sup>30</sup>. And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. <sup>31</sup>. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. <sup>32</sup>. <sup>b</sup>Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. <sup>33</sup>. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

<sup>1</sup>Luke xi. 47. <sup>2</sup>1 Kings xix. 10; Acts vii. 52; 1 Thes. ii. 15. <sup>3</sup>Gen. xv. 16; Dan. viii. 23; 1 Thes. ii. 16. <sup>4</sup>Chap. iii. 7.

*Ye build the tombs, &c.* You profess great respect for the memory of the martyred prophets, and great disapprobation of your ancestors who put them to death, and yet you cherish the same malignant dispositions, and are about to imitate the very conduct which you so loudly condemn. How does your conduct contradict your professions? *Wherefore ye be witnesses, &c.* This witness does not refer to their building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, but to the manner in which they had treated John, and were treating Jesus Himself—and were to treat both Him and His inspired messengers. You persecute, and ere long will imbrue your hands in the blood of men possessed of the same characters, invested with the same authority, and teaching the same doctrines, as those on whom you heap posthumous honors, and of whose murder and murderers you profess so strongly an abhorrence. Your conduct to me, in desiring my death as you are doing just now, can be vindicated only on principles which would vindicate the conduct of the opposers, and persecutors, and murderers, of the ancient prophets. *Fill ye up then, &c.* Some say this was spoken prophetically; others permissively; others still, make it an ironical imperative. “Do what ye purpose at once.” If this is irony, it is Divine irony, as in Psalm xxi. 4. The pronoun *ye*, is expressed not only in contrast to *your fathers*, but also to show an indicative force in the imperative, *fill ye up, ye will fill up, fill ye up* therefore. Comp. John xiii. 27. When ye will, be no longer

hindered. Be ye left to yourselves. What you cherish in the heart, do with the hand. *The measure of your fathers, i. e.*, what remains to be filled up of the measure of the national sin which your fathers have been filling up. (See Isa. vi.; Matt. xiii. 14; Acts xxviii. 26.) They would fill up the measure of iniquity by crucifying the Messiah, and abusing and putting to death His Apostles and followers. As the individual man may fill up the measure of forbearance granted him by God, and thus come to destruction, so may a people, viewed as a body, or, as it were, as a larger individual. (See Gen. xv. 16; Amos i. 3, &c.) *ye serpents . . . generation of viper.* Their subtily was like that of the serpent. (See on Chap. iii. 7, xii. 34.)

*How can ye escape, &c.* The question is sometimes the strongest mode of affirmation. Our Lord here means to assert that as their heart is so corrupt, and their habits of sin are so confirmed, reformation in them is not to be expected; in other words, they cannot escape *the damnation of hell, i. e.*, the condemnation and sentence of punishment in hell, to be pronounced by the Judge, at the day of final account. (See on chap. v. 22.) The language here used is that of grief and despair respecting their amendment and salvation, and of surrendering them to their own will.

34. <sup>a</sup>Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and <sup>b</sup>some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and <sup>c</sup>some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: <sup>35</sup>. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, <sup>1</sup>from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

<sup>2</sup>Chap. xxi. 34, 35; Luke xi. 49. <sup>3</sup>Acts v. 40, vii. 53, 59, xxii. 19. <sup>4</sup>Chap. x. 17; Mark x. 39; Acts v. 40; 2 Cor. xi. 24, 25. <sup>5</sup>Rev. xviii. 24. <sup>6</sup>Gen. iv. 8; Heb. xi. 4; 1 John iii. 12. <sup>7</sup>Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

*Wherefore.* In consequence of all this wickedness. *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 wise men and scribes—* evidently evangelical messengers, but called by the familiar Jewish names of “prophets, wise men and scribes,” whose counterparts were the inspired and gifted servants of the Lord Jesus, for in Luke (xi. 49) it is, “prophets and apostles.” *And some of them, &c.* A large share of the first preachers, thinkers and writers of the

Church, were martyrs. Stephen was stoned (Acts vii. 59), James was slain with the sword (Acts xii. 1-3), Peter was crucified (See John xxi. 18, 19; 2 Peter i. 14), the Apostles were imprisoned with scourging (Acts v. 18, 40), Paul and Barnabas were persecuted from city to city (Acts xiii. 50, xiv. 5, 6, 19, 20).

*That.* In order that—a statement of the inevitableness of the result. Not that this was the purpose for which these prophets and messengers were to be sent, but that this would be the consequence of the Jews slaying and persecuting them. *Upon you may come all the righteous blood, i. e.,* all the judgments for the slaughter of righteous men. *From the blood of righteous Abel, &c.* Abel, who was the first martyr. He is counted among the prophets, because he prefigured Jesus Christ by his innocence and death, as Cain did Judas, &c. *Unto the blood of Zacharias,* the last of the prophets, whose martyrdom is, according to the arrangement of the Hebrew canon, recorded in the Old Testament. *Son of Baruchias.* In 2 Chron. xxiv. 21, the martyr Zechariah is called the son of Jehoiada. But Jehoiada and Barachia are words of the same meaning, and it is not improbable, though there is no proof, that in our Lord's day the one name was substituted for the other in ordinary discourse. By the case of Abel and that of Zacharias Jesus couples the first and last of Old Testament martyrs.

36. Verily, I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

The accumulated guilt of ages was, as it were, to become theirs, by the murder of the Messiah and His Apostles, and awful was the retribution which awaited them. The history of the last days of the Jewish republic, as recorded by their own unbelieving historian, shows that the judgments executed on the Jewish nation were such as to fill to the full, human nature's capacities for suffering. Thousands have shed their blood for the truth. The frequent triumphing of the wicked is perplexing. The judgment day will show that however Christians may die, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

1. Luke xiii. 34. 2. Dent. xxxiii. 11, 12. 3. Ps. xvii. 8, xci. 4.

The prospect of Christ's death, with all its attendant horrors, did not excite angry feelings in His heart. Instead of expressing anger, He burst forth into these lamentations, which for tenderness and pathos, have never been equalled. *O Jerusalem.* (See on Luke xiii. 34.) From the scribes and Pharisees Jesus now addresses Himself to Jerusalem, the central point of the hierarchy, the metropolis of Judaism. *That killest, &c.,* identifying the Jerusalem of the then present day with the Jerusalem of past ages. *Sent unto thee,* as messengers of truth from the Lord.

*How often, &c.* 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.* How majestic is this *I* of the incarnate Logos! The Greek word in both these phrases is stronger than appears from our English translation. It is, literally, "I willed, and ye willed not." *Even as a hen, &c.* The emblem here employed is similar to what is used with respect of *Ἰερουσαλ.* (See Deut. xxxii. 11; Ruth ii. 12; Ps. xvii. 8, xxxvi. 7, lvii. 1, lxiii. 7, xci. 4.) It shows the Saviour's tender love and faithful care of His redeemed people, and His *power* is also adequate to the confidence reposed in Him. He bore the storm of Divine justice against our sins, in order to save us from it, and "suffered being tempted, that He might succor us when tempted." He calls sinners to take refuge under His protection, and there keeps them safe, and nourishes them unto eternal life. We must not, because we are Christians, shut our eyes to the bright world that is around us, for in the instinct of birds, in the habits of bees, in the peculiarities of all created things, in the structure of minerals, in the petals, fragrance, habits and climates of flowers, there is an immensity of Divine teaching. Only it needs nature's book to be read in the splendor in which it was originally written, and when a Christian's eye reads that book, its page is full of deep, significant, and precious meaning.

*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, 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.

38. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Ps. cxviii. 26; chap. xxi. 9.

*Your house.* Here there may be an allusion to the temple. Your temple (now not God's house, but *your* house), in which you glory. *Is left unto you desolate.* The Greek word for "desolate" means solitary, deserted, not laid waste. But the meaning is the same: desolation and destruction are the necessary consequences of the Divine withdrawal, as the Lord had foretold even unto Solomon. (1 Kings ix. 7-9.) This declaration of the parting Messiah

has been literally fulfilled, not only by the destruction of the temple, but also by the futile attempt of Julian, the apostate, to rebuild it, and by the condition of Jerusalem up to this day.

*Till ye*—in your posterity in a future age. *Blessed is he, &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. What did Jesus say concerning the scribes and the Pharisees in Moses' seat? 2. What did they love? 3. Explain verses 10 and 11. 4. What is the first "woe" Christ denounced? 5. What the second? 6. What the third? 7. What the fourth? 8. What the fifth? 9. What the sixth? 10. What the seventh? 11. Explain verses 34 and 35. 12. How are we to understand "all these things shall come upon this generation?" 13. Repeat Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem. 14. What is the great reason why sinners are not saved?

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

1 Christ foretelleth the destruction of the temple; 3 what and how great calamities shall be before it; 29 the signs of his coming to judgment. 36. And because that day and hour is unknown, 42 we ought to watch like good servants, expecting every moment our master's coming.

This chapter is full of prophecy; prophecy of which a large portion is unfulfilled; prophecy, which ought to be deeply interesting to all true Christians. It is a subject to which the Holy Ghost says, we "do well to take heed." (2 Peter i.)

AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.—Mark xiii. 1, xxi. 5.

*Went out, &c.* Our Saviour thus gave in

action a farther expression of the sentence He had pronounced in word. (Chap. xxiii. 38.) *To shew him, &c., i. e.* to draw His attention to the magnitude, splendor, apparent solidity and stability of that magnificent structure. As the whole temple was built with the greatest cost and splendor, so nothing was more stupendous than the uncommon measure of the stones, some of which, particularly those employed in the foundations, were in magnitude 40 cubits, and the superstructure was worthy of such foundations. A cubit

was about 22 inches of our measure. Some of the stones were of the whitest marble, 45 cubits long, 5 cubits high, and 5 broad. "The appearance of the temple," says *Josephus*, "was such as to strike the mind, and astonish the sight." *Tacitus* describes it as "of immense opulence." The disciples probably meant to insinuate to their Divine Master that this unrivalled edifice was built for eternity; was formed to stand the shock of ages, and to resist the utmost efforts of human power to destroy it.

2. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, <sup>3</sup>These shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

<sup>4</sup>1 Kings ix. 7; Jer. xxiv. 18; Mi. iii. 12; Luke xix. 41.

*See ye not, &c.* Our Lord, by His conduct, teaches us what use we ought to make of the sight of such objects as these, namely, to consider that in a very little time they will disappear and be no more, and that there is nothing solid and durable but that which is not seen. *There shall not be, &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 Mariamme, 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 from the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited." (Comp. Ps. cxxxvii. 9.) *Maimonides*, a Jewish rabbi, says, that "the very foundations of the temple were digged up, according to the Roman custom." *Eusebius* also assures us that the temple was plowed up by the Romans, and that he himself saw it lying in ruins. (See on Luke xix. 44, xxi. 6.) Learn, hence, 1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms. 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled. whatever apparent improbabilities there may be to the contrary.

3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world."

<sup>5</sup>Mark xiii. 3. <sup>6</sup>1 Thes. v. 1.

The Mount of Olives commanded a very fine view of the temple from the east. *Disciples.* Peter, James and John. (Mark xiii. 3.) *Privately*—apart from the other disciples. *When . . . and what sign.* They wished to know, 1. The precise time of the approaching catastrophe; 2. The sign of it. It seems plain from their inquiry, that they had gathered from some of our Lord's sayings that there was some intimate connection between the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem, and the final coming of our Lord at the end of the world, though how to separate the type from the antitype, the less from the more full accomplishment, they knew not. Jesus answered the last question of the disciples, while He in reference to the first gave to them only general intimations. The signs which He gives are at the same time of such a nature, that they, in fact, are only to be seen precursively at the destruction of Jerusalem, but will appear decisively and in their full force at the end of the world, of which Jerusalem's destruction was a type. 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.

4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. 5. For many shall come in my name; saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many."

<sup>7</sup>Eph. v. 6; Col. ii. 3, 18; 2 Thes. ii. 3; 1 John iv. 1. <sup>8</sup>ix. 14, xxiii. 21, verse 24; John v. 43, &c.

*Jesus answered, &c.* The discourse separates into four divisions: 1. The first (5-14) suggests the probable sources of deception in regard to the coming of the Son of man; 2. The second (15-28) considers the calamities of Jerusalem, as a special source of deception; 3. A description of the coming of the Son of man with special reference to the question of the disciples; 4. The discourse is summed up (32-36), and is the answer to the question of the disciples, so far as any answer can be given. Here our Lord distinguishes between "these things" (33, 34) and "that day and hour" (36). By the

former, which the disciples had used in their question, He means the calamities of Jerusalem; by the latter, His coming at the end of the world.

*Take heed, &c.* A most needful warning. Satan knows well the value of prophecy, and has ever labored to bring the subject into contempt. In our 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. *For many, &c.* Among the false Christs that soon appeared, were Dositheus, the Samaritan, and Simon Magus. *Josephus* says, "Many affirmed the time of the advent to have arrived;" and *Hegesippus* says, "Many false Christs came." We find a false Christ whenever we find a deceitful guide, who directs us not to Jesus Christ, who leads us to a Church which is not His, who inspires us with a doctrine which He never taught, who diverts us from the way of the Gospel, and who, by his whole conduct, carries us at a distance from the cross and from salvation.

6. And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of war: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

That there were wars and great disturbances during the interval of forty years, appears from all the historians of that period, especially *Josephus*. *The end, &c.* of the Jewish State. It is vain to expect peace until the Prince of Peace returns. Then, and not until then, the swords shall be beaten into plowshares, and nations learn war no more.

7. For *nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.*  
<sup>1</sup>2 Chron. xv. 16; <sup>2</sup>Isa. xix. 2; Heb. ii. 22; Zech. xiv. 13.

*Nation shall rise against nation.* This portended the dissensions, insurrections, and mutual slaughter of the Jews, and those of other nations who dwell 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 20,000 Jews were slain, and the city was cleared of the Jewish inhabitants. The whole Jewish nation being exasperated at this, flew to arms, and burnt and plundered

the neighboring cities and villages of the Syrians, making an immense slaughter of the people. The Syrians, in return, destroyed not a less number of the Jews.

*Kingdom against kingdom.* This portended the open wars of different tetrarchies and provinces against one another; as that of the Jews who dwelt in Perea against the people of Philadelphia, concerning their bounds, while Cuspius Fadius 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. But there was not only sedition and civil war throughout Judea, but likewise in Italy, Otho and Vitellius contending for the empire.

*Famines and pestilences.* It is evident from *Josephus*, as well as *Eusebius*, *Suetonius*, and several other profane historians, that there were famines and pestilences in divers places. The first named historian says, that the famine under Claudius Cæsar, predicted by Agabus (Acts ii. 28), was so severe that at Jerusalem many died of starvation. Famines and pestilences are ever attendant upon civil commotions and wars. The cessation of the labors of husbandry produces scarcity; exposure, hardship, and the effluvia of the dead produces *pestilences*.

*Earthquakes in divers places.* 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. It is probable that Jerusalem herself was warned most loudly by a terrible earthquake, accompanied by thunders, lightnings and overwhelming storms.

8. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

Terrible as all these omens—wars, famines, pestilences, fearful sights, and great signs from heaven—were, they are small compared to the miseries of the siege and downfall of the city. The word translated *sorrows*, should rather be rendered "birth-pangs." The expression is remarkable in

its secondary application, and in the highest degree suggestive, recalling those many other places of Scripture where creation is spoken of in kindred terms: now, as groaning and travailling (Rom. viii. 22); now, as destined to undergo a process of "regeneration." (Matt. xix. 28.)

9. <sup>1</sup>Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

<sup>2</sup>Chap. 17; Mark xiii. 9; Luke xxi. 12; John xv. 20 and xvi. 2; Acts iv. 2, 3 and vii. 59 and xii. 1, &c.; 1 Peter iv. 16; Rev. ii. 10, 13.

There appears to be a special reference here to the persecutions undergone by the early Christians between the time of our Lord's ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem. There is a noticeable climax in the indicated persecutions, 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 and devoted to His service. (Rom. viii. 35-37; 1 Cor. iv. 9, 10; 2 Cor. xi. 23-29; Heb. x. 32-34.)

10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xi. 6 and xiii. 57; 2 Tim. i. 15, and iv. 10, 16.

The meaning is, that many who professed faith in Christ, terrified with these persecutions, should become apostates, and renounce their faith. (See 2 Tim. i. 15; iv. 10.) *Betray one another.* This is remarkably verified by the testimony of *Tacitus*, who, in describing the persecution under Nero, tells us, "that several Christians at first were apprehended, and then, by their discovery, a multitude of others were convicted, and cruelly put to death with derision and insult."

11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. vii. 15; Acts xx. 29; 2 Peter ii. 1. <sup>2</sup>1 Tim. iv. 1.

*Many false prophets.* Such was the Egyptian, who collected together above 30,000 Jews whom he had deceived (Acts xxi. 38), and *Theudas*, a magician, who, as *Josephus* says, deceived many, and a multitude of others who deluded the people even to the last, with a promise of help from God. And in the time of Nero, when Felix was procurator of Judea, such a number of these

impostors made their appearance, that many of them were seized and put to death every day.

12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

It is here predicted that the great prevalence of impiety, lawlessness and terror, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was typical of His judicial coming, and the cruel treatment which the adversaries of the Messiah's followers would exercise toward them, would chill mutual love, make men more anxious about their own safety than about the good of others, and cool their love to their Master. (See 2 Tim. i. 15, iv. 10; Heb. x. 25.) It is the nature of love to *burn*. Love is the ornament and strength of Christians. (See Phil. i. 9; 2 Peter i. 7; Rev. ii. 4.) When Jesus shall come again, surely none will feel so much ashamed to see Him as those who professed to walk with Him a little way, and to love Him for a little while, but whose feet grew weary, and whose love waxed cold.

13. <sup>1</sup>But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

<sup>2</sup>Chap. x. 22; Mark xiii. 13; Heb. iii. 6, 14; Rev. ii. 10.

He whose hope (verse 10), and faith (verse 11), and charity (verse 12), endure to the end, and he who bears afflictions, persecutions, &c., faithfully, that throughout all trials, even unto death, maintains his attachment to Christ and adheres to the truth, shall inherit the kingdom prepared for those who overcome. It is the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that they who persevere in the belief and practice of Christianity to the end of their lives, shall, through the merits of their Redeemer, be rewarded with everlasting life.

14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. iv. 23 and ix. 35. <sup>2</sup>Rom. x. 18; Col. ii. 6, 23.

Notwithstanding the persecutions foretold, there was to be an universal publication of the announcement of Messiah's reign, and the doctrines of His religion. (See on chap. iv. 23.) Paul (Col. i. 6, 23) speaks of the Gospel "being come unto all the world, and preached to every creature under heaven." And we learn from the most authentic writers, and the most ancient records, that the Gospel was preached within thirty years after the



death of Christ in Idumea, Syria and Mesopotamia, in Media and Parthia, and many parts of Asia Minor, in Egypt, Mauretania, Ethiopia, and other regions of Africa, in Greece and Italy, as far north as Scythia, and as far westward as Spain. The words, *in all the world*, are not to be limited, in their application, to the Roman empire or to the destruction of Jerusalem. *For a witness*, &c. Testified to them faithfully, even unto martyrdom, it will be a witness unto them, and then it will be a witness concerning them and against them. By *the end*, in the sense which the Saviour mainly attached to it, the end of the whole great period is meant during which Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, closed by the judicial coming of the Lord. The Gospel, that is, the tidings of the fullest revelation of God, must be *preached unto all*, so that each and every man is thereby, as it were, compelled to take part either for or against Christ. The gigantic missionary operations of our days have brought us considerably nearer than ever before, to the fulfillment of this word of our Lord.

15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand.)

16. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.

<sup>a</sup>Mark xlii. 14; Luke xxi. 20. <sup>b</sup>Dan. ix. 27, xii. 11. <sup>c</sup>Dan. ix. 23, 25.

*The abomination of desolation*, &c. This was intended to point to the Roman ensigns, as the symbols of an idolatrous, and so unclean, Pagan power, &c. Upon the standards of the Roman army, were depicted the images of their emperor and their tutelary gods, whom they worshipped: and it is well known that idols were held by the Jews in the utmost abhorrence, hence the term *abomination*. *Desolation* is added for an obvious reason, because this mighty army brought ruin and desolation upon Jerusalem. The city, and the mount on which it stood, and a circuit of several furlongs around it, were accounted holy ground, and as the Roman standards were planted in the most conspicuous places near the fortifications of the city, they are here said to *stand in the holy place*. *Josephus* tells us that after the city was taken, "the Romans brought their ensigns into the temple, and placed one of them against

the eastern gate, and sacrificed to them there, which was the greatest insult and outrage that could possibly be offered to that wretched people."

*Whoso readeth, let him understand*. This seems a warning of the Evangelist to his Christian reader to note the admonition to escape, though some understand these words as having come from the lips of Christ Himself, exhorting to a proper understanding of the dark saying, in reference to the passages (Dan. xii. 4, 10, ix. 23, 25) where Daniel himself is exhorted to listen closely in order to understand. *In Judea*. In the heart of the population. *Flee into 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. These kind admonitions were not lost upon the disciples. Ecclesiastical history informs us that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem. When the Roman general, Cestius Gallus, three years before the siege by Titus, invested the city, he "very unadvisedly," as *Josephus* says, "withdrew his armies." From this attack, a large number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem took alarm, and withdrew from the city as soon as the Roman army had retired. Among those who escaped were the Christians, some of them retiring to Pella, and some to Mount Libanus. The result of this was, that when the last great war, under Vespasian and Titus, broke out shortly afterward, the Christians almost entirely escaped its desolation.

17. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: 18. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

The Jew on the top or flat roof of his house, looking for the signs of the approaching judgment, or watching the manœuvring of the Roman army, when he saw this great abomination, or heard it had taken place, was here warned not to go down into his house to carry away any of his goods, but to leave them, and escape with all speed to the mountains. *To take his clothes*, *i. e.*, the upper garments (the cloak and coat), which husbandmen of the southern countries have ever, when at work, laid aside, or left at home. These passages intimate the greatness of the peril of that

hour, when the guilty city, like another Sodom, should be marked for destruction.

19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!—*Luke xxiii. 29.*

This is not an imprecation, but a bitter lamentation, in which the compassion and the sympathy of the Saviour expresses itself for suffering humanity. Sad would it be for those who, in such a time of terror and distress, had any natural impediments to obstruct their flight.

20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.

*Not in the winter*—making escape perilous, by reason of the coldness of the season or the bad state of the roads, or tempting you to delay your flight. *Neither on the Sabbath day.* The Jewish Christians might entertain scruples against traveling on the Sabbath beyond the legal distance, which was about five furlongs. But even if free from such scruples, they would be liable to detentions on the roads should they attempt to travel contrary to Jewish laws. Besides, at a time when fanaticism was at its height, they would have been in the utmost danger of the worst persecutions by the Jews. The instruction which Jesus here gives to His disciples, to pray for alleviating circumstances at the consummation of the woes foretold here, teaches us that special interpositions of Divine Providence are dependent on Christian prayer.

21. For when shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.—*Dan. ix. 26 and xii. 1; Joel ii. 2.*

*For then.* By the greatness of the terror, which the Lord only hints at circuitously, they were to measure the swiftness of their flight. *Shall be great tribulation, &c.* The siege of Jerusalem was indeed attended with unexampled horrors, as well as the most appalling wickedness. *Josephus*, who was an eye-witness of the sufferings which our Lord here predicts, states it as his opinion “that the misfortunes of all men, *from the beginning of the world*, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as theirs were,” “nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness *from the beginning of the world.*”

Not only did civil strife rage within the city, but three powerful factions contended

for the mastery with such violence and hate, that captivity seemed a far inferior evil to the actual sufferings of the inhabitants. The city was densely crowded in consequence of the multitudes which had come up to the Feast of the Passover. Pestilence ensued, and, in consequence of the destruction of their stores by fire, famine followed shortly after. The very instincts of humanity seemed to forsake the people. Women snatched the food from the mouths of their husbands and children. The most revolting acts of violence were practiced without remorse and without rebuke; barbarities were perpetrated too disgraceful even to be described. The houses, the very streets of the city, were filled with dead bodies, which armed assassins rifled and mangled with fiendish exultation. So excessive was the stench that it became necessary to hurl above six hundred thousand corpses over the walls. Meantime, the besieged were reduced to such extremity that they gladly ate not only their belts and shoes, but the very filth of the streets. One woman, a mother, as if unconscious of natural instinct, killed, roasted and devoured her infant son, deliberately reserving half for a second meal. So monstrous an iniquity had been foretold in prophecy for fifteen hundred years. (*Deut. xxviii. 56, 57; Lev. xxvi. 29.*) It is plain that our Lord here speaks of the tribulation connected with the approaching destruction of Jerusalem as the type which shall be connected with His judicial coming.

22. And except those days shall be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.—*Isa. lxxv. 8, 9; Zech. xiv. 2, 3.*

The consequence of long protracted hostility would probably have been the universal destruction of the Jews. But for the preservation of the sound portion, however small, of the Jews, and especially the Christians, God by His Providence *shortened the duration of the war*, as by the same providence He had *protracted the commencement of it*, in order to give time to the Christians to escape. The following causes have been enumerated as contributing to this result: 1. Claudius, A. D. 42 or 43, ordered Herod Agrippa to stop strengthening the walls; 2. In consequence of their divisions, the Jews had made no prepara-

tion to withstand a siege; 3. The corn and provisions had been burnt just before the arrival of Titus; 4. Titus arrived suddenly, and the Jews voluntarily abandoned some part of the fortification; 5. According to *Josephus*, Titus acknowledged that it was by God's power he had succeeded in capturing the city.

*No flesh*, no human life. *The elect's sake*, &c. Christians, God's chosen and beloved ones, not only those then living in Palestine, but such as in future were to be gathered from the Jews (Rom. xi. 15), and which promise depended upon their continued existence as a nation. God specially loves His people. They are jewels among mankind. He hears their prayers. All things work together for good to them. Happy are those who know that they are one of the number of God's chosen ones! There breathes not the man or woman who can prove that he or she is not one. The promises of the Gospel are open to all. May we give diligence to make our calling and election sure! God's elect are a people who cry unto Him night and day. When Paul saw the faith, and hope, and love of the Thessalonians, then he knew "their election of God." (1 Thes. i. 4; Luke xviii. 7.)

23. <sup>a</sup>Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. 24. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25. Behold, I have told you before. 26. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; Behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not.

<sup>b</sup>Mark xiii. 21; Luke xvii. 23 and xxi. 8. <sup>c</sup>Deut. xliii. 1, verse 5, 11; 2 Thes. ii. 9, 10, 11; Rev. xiii. 13. <sup>d</sup>John vi. 37 and x. 28, 29; Rom. viii. 28, 29, 30; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

*Lo, here is Christ*, &c. The local Messiahs who would start up in different places, or might be rumored to have started up, would prove deceivers. 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 also meant to apply to the time 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. (See 2 Thes. ii. 1-10.) There

are false churches, as well as false Christs, and the true spouse is known by the same marks with the true bridegroom. (See on verses 4, 5, 11.)

*There shall arise false Christs, &c.* *Josephus* informs us that false prophets and impostors prevailed on multitudes to follow them into the *desert*, promising there to display prodigies and *signs*, but that those who listened to them suffered the just punishment of their folly, and were either slain or dispersed by the Roman governor. One such case of imposture on the part of an Egyptian is found alluded to in the Acts (xxi. 38).

*Insomuch that if it were possible, &c.* (See verse 22.) Implying that this, though all but done, would prove impossible. (See 2 Thes. ii. 9-12.) *Behold, I have told you before.* I have now forewarned you against these impostors. *Wherefore, i. e.*, in view of the warning now given you. *They shall say, &c.* This refers to such persons as professed to have found the Messiah. Our Lord had just told them that the seduction of the elect would prove impossible, but since this would be all but accomplished, He bids them "take heed," be on their guard, as the proper means of averting that catastrophe.

27. <sup>a</sup>For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.—<sup>b</sup>Luke xvii. 24.

The coming of false Christs would be on earth, while the next coming of Jesus would be in the sky, like the lightning 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. Only a few disciples saw Him ascend in the clouds from the Mount of Olives, but every eye shall behold Him when He comes again. How exceedingly great will be the brightness of that day! When the Lord Jesus appeared to the persecuting Saul, the light was beyond the brightness of the sun at noonday, and its dazzling splendor blinded the eyes of the astonished man. (Acts xxvi. 13.) But when He comes

again, the light will spread over the whole world, saints will be strengthened to gaze upon the scene, and will be changed into the image of their Lord, while impenitent sinners will find the day of *brightness* a day of *darkness* to them. (Amos v. 18-20.) The suddenness of Christ's second appearing is a solemn thought. It ought to make us study a continued preparedness of mind. Our heart's desire and endeavor should be to be always ready to meet the Lord. (Rev. xvi. 15.)

23. <sup>a</sup>For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.  
<sup>b</sup>Job xxxix. 30; Luke xvii. 37.

*The carcass is, &c.* This proverbial expression is generally understood as referring to the Romans, suddenly and openly gathered together for the destruction of Jerusalem. It denotes that where sin and crime abound, God's judgments will be sure to follow. Under the general name *eagle*, the Bible includes the *vulture*, a well known bird of prey, which is probably here meant, as eagles rarely, if ever, feed upon dead carcasses. Probably this expression will only be fully understood at our Lord's second coming. Let us not be too curious to pry into the "secret things" which "belong unto the Lord."

23. <sup>a</sup>Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:  
<sup>b</sup>Dan. vii. 11, 12. <sup>c</sup>Isa. xlii. 10; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Joel ii. 10, 31 and iii. 15; Amos v. 20 and vii. 9; Mark xlii. 24; Luke xxi. 25; Acts ii. 20; Rev. vi. 12.

"The words, *those days*," says a learned commentator, with whom we agree, in his interpretation of the passage, "here refer to the latter days implied in Luke xxi. 24, of which Matthew has preserved but a fragment. The *those days* of this verse, then, are the *days* of the great period of which *the eagles and the carcass* in the preceding verse are a fragmentary symbol. This symbol is a broken label of the whole period between the downfall and the advent, Luke supplying the condensed remainder of the label. The *contrast* lies between the *slow expansion* of that period and the *suddenness* of the *advent* to break and close it. *Immediately*, suddenly, after the 'tribulation' following the *those days* of the treading down of Jerusalem, and the fullness of the Gentiles, shall the advent take place. The phrase *those days*

thus stands in contrast with the phrase 'these things,' in the Apostles' question. (Mark xiii. 4; Luke xxi. 7.) The period of the destruction and the period of the advent stand, as the Lord intended, in stupendous contrast." If we ask, When shall the second advent take place? Mark answers, It is in *those days* which are *after that* (Jewish) *tribulation*. If we ask, In what part of *those days*? Matthew will answer, *Immediately after* the (mundane) *tribulation of those days*. We have then this parallel: a tribulation including Jerusalem's destruction, a tribulation ending in the world's judgment. That a tribulation is to precede the second advent is the clear doctrine of Scripture. Thus, in Rev. xx. 7-10, at the close of the millennial thousand years, Satan, who had been bound during that period, is let loose, and with his armies besieges the camp of the saints just before the appearance of the judgment throne. And in 2 Peter iii.: "In the last days scoffers shall come," &c. Of this truth the Jewish tradition gives a shadowing, in the doctrine that a desperate tribulation shall precede Messiah's advent. "The Jews (as *Kuinoel* observes) expected that great calamities would precede the advent of the Messiah, yet at the time when these calamities should have reached their height they hoped that He would unexpectedly appear."

*Shall the sun be darkened, &c.* Both *Josephus* and *Tacitus* tell us that a variety of astonishing signs and prodigies preceded the calamities that impended over the Jews. (See on verse 7.) 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 changes and revolutions.

30. <sup>a</sup>And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.  
<sup>b</sup>Dan. vii. 13. <sup>c</sup>Zech. xii. 12. <sup>d</sup>Chap. xvi. 27; Mark xlii. 28; Rev. i. 7.

*The sign of the Son of man.* As our Lord does not say wherein this sign shall con-

sist, the commentator, as a matter of course, does not know. This much, however, is certain, that all the inhabitants of the earth will thereby be convinced of the nearness of Christ's coming to judgment, as lightning filling the whole horizon forebodes the impending storm. As the sign mentioned here, and those in verse 29, are the effects of Christ's coming, there is no contradiction in these verses of the repeated declaration that the coming will be without warning, and sudden. It is just, that He should appear for His glory, in His own natural greatness and majesty, who, for our salvation, was pleased to appear mean, abject, and contemptible to the eyes of men.

*Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,* that is, all unbelievers, all hypocrites, all enemies of Christ. *And they shall see,* &c. The appearance of Jesus will be visible to all. "Every eye shall see Him." (Acts i. 9-12; also Rev. xix. 11.) Whoever has despised the Son of man in His humility, shall be forced to see Him in all His majesty and power. Those to whom His state of weakness and humiliation, at His first coming, has been an occasion of scandal and incredulity, shall, in the power and glory of His second, behold their infidelity confounded.

31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.—Chap. xiii. 41; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thes. iv. 16.

*His angels.* (See on xiii. 41.) Angels are spoken of as the ministers of Divine providence, the instruments by which God accomplishes His purposes. (Ps. xxxiv. 7, xci. 11, 12, ciii. 21.) *With a great sound,* &c. The Jewish assemblies used to be called together by the sound of a trumpet, as ours are by bells. (Num. x. 2; Judg. iii. 27.) Our Saviour speaking to the Jews, described the assembling of the people at the last day in a way which would be peculiarly clear and impressive to them. (See 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thes. iv. 16; Rev. xi. 15.) *And they shall gather together,* &c. Here the resurrection of the elect (the first resurrection, primarily) is declared. Properly, "gather together into one place," that is, to the Son of man where He is just about to make His appearance on earth.

*His elect,* that is, His chosen people, the

followers of Christ. With the appearance of the Lord, His Church also, hitherto scattered and concealed among the nations, will be fully united and appear in festal array. The bride of Rev. xxi. 9. *The four winds . . . . one end of heaven to the other.* The original word for *end* signifies any *extremity*. Where earth ends, there heaven begins: hence also *mountains* and *heavens* are sometimes made parallel. (2 Sam. xxii. 8; Ps. xviii. 7.) The *four winds* are spoken of, as there are said to be "four corners of the earth." (See Isa. xlili. 5. 6; Matt. viii. 11; Ezek. xxxvii. 9; Zech. ii. 6; Rev. vii. 1.) In the day of judgment true Christians shall be perfectly safe. Then, the mighty angels who rejoiced in heaven when each sinner repented, shall gladly catch up the people of Christ to meet their Lord in the air. Then, too, the saints of every age and every tongue shall be assembled out of every land. All shall be there, from righteous Abel down to the last soul that is converted to God—from the oldest patriarch down to the little infant that just breathed and died. Let us think what a happy gathering that will be, when all the family of God are at length together.

32. Now learn ka parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: 33. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.—Luke xxi. 29. James v. 9.

This comparison was designed by our Lord to show that the signs of which He had spoken were as indubitably 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. *When ye shall see,* &c. Our Lord here teaches that His kingdom will not be near until after a period of fearful wars and tribulation. (See Luke xxi. 31.)

Let us pursue the hint which Christ is here pleased to give us, by accustoming ourselves to look upon this present world, its elements and seasons, as a representation of the world to come. Sensual and sordid persons look upon the spring as a time which is favorable to their pleasures and their covetousness: true Christians

look upon this general resurrection of nature as a slight draught of the resurrection of the children of God, and as a sign of the approach of the Sun of Righteousness.

34. Verily I say unto you, <sup>a</sup>This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

<sup>b</sup>Chap. xvi. 28, and xxiii. 36; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32.

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 question in verse 3, as referring 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.

Many eminent men regard the Saviour as teaching here, that until He returns to this earth, the Jews will always remain a separate people. Certainly, the continued existence of this people as a distinct nation is a great miracle. Without a land, without a king, without a government, scattered and dispersed over the world for eighteen hundred years, the Jews are never absorbed among the people of the countries where they live, like Frenchmen, Englishmen and Germans, but "dwell alone." Nothing can account for this but the finger of God. The Jewish nation stands before the world a crushing answer to infidelity, and a living book of evidence that the Bible is true.

35. <sup>a</sup>Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

<sup>b</sup>Ps. cii. 25; Isa. li. 6; Jer. xxxi. 35, 36; chap. v. 18; Mark xiii. 31; Luke xxi. 33; Heb. i. 11.

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. (2 Peter iii. 12, 13; Heb. i. 11, 12; Isa. li. 6; Rev. xxi. 1.)

36. <sup>a</sup>But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

<sup>b</sup>Mark xiii. 32; Acts i. 7; 1 Thes. v. 2; 2 Peter iii. 10. <sup>c</sup>Zech. xiv. 7.

As to the temple and the city, the Lord shows the time (verse 32-34); as to the world, He declares here that the day and the hour are unknown. *But* implies a contrast; *these* and *this* (verse 34) refer to the near, *that* to the distant. If, however, the former time is defined with some latitude, *that day* and hour is much less definitely indicated here; and yet He does not speak of a *day* and *hour* without cause. *Day* is a whole, *hour* a part. *Knoweth no man*, &c. It has been a matter of much controversy even among the firmest believers in the proper Divinity of Christ, whether this statement concerning the Son, means that *He was not at that time in possession of the knowledge referred to*, or simply that it was not among the things which he had received to communicate. The Greek word which properly signifies, "I knew," when used in the sense of the Hebrew conjugation, *Hiphil*, as it here seems to be, signifies, *I make another to know, I declare*. The word has this meaning without dispute (1 Cor. ii. 2), "I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," *i. e.*, I determined to make known, to preach nothing among you, but Jesus Christ. So, also, in this passage, "But of that day and that hour, none maketh you know," none hath power to make you know it (just as the phrase, Matt. xx. 23, "is not mine to give," signifies, "is not in my power to give"), "no, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father."

In support of this interpretation, we have our Lord's way of speaking of His communications to men, as, for example, in such passages as these: "And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth." "I speak to the world those things that I have heard of Him." "The Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak." (John iii. 32, viii. 26, xii. 49.) In this view, as the precise time of Christ's coming was certainly not in His instructions, as He had not "*seen and heard*" it, and so could not "testify" it, as He had

no communication from His Father on that subject, it is not difficult to understand how He might, in this sense, after saying that neither men nor angels knew it, add, that *Himself knew it not*, without the danger of lowering, even in the minds of His half-instructed disciples, the impression of His Omniscience, which every fresh communication to them only tended to deepen.

Jesus had a human as well as Divine nature, and His humanity was complete, or, in other words, His human nature was limited, like ours, in its mental capacities. Hence, the ignorance of the Son here referred to involves no greater difficulty than what is said by Luke (ii. 52), that He "increased in wisdom, and in favor with God and man," which certainly could not be predicated of His Divine nature. The fact that our Lord possessed two natures, the Divine and human, each complete, and neither of the two interfering with or modifying essentially the attributes of the other, is distinctly and abundantly revealed in Scripture. The manner of their co-existence in one person, in such distinctness and yet intimate union, is, of course, wholly beyond our comprehension. It is possible, however, that this union is more inexplicable than the union of our soul and body, solely because it occurs but once and has no analogy.

How remarkable it is that the time of Christ's second coming should be concealed from the knowledge of every creature! *Angels* know not the time, they know not when they shall be summoned to attend their King in His chariot of clouds. *Devils* know not the time, they know not when they shall be immured in their dark prison, and no longer permitted to tempt the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea. *Wicked* men know not the time, they know not when their day of grace will end. Righteous men know not the time, they know not when they shall be caught up to meet their Lord in the air.

37. But as the days of *Noe were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that *Noe* entered into the ark. 39. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.  
Gen. vi. 3, 4, 5; Luke xvii. 26; 1 Peter iii. 20.

As the days of *Noe were*. Although the

coming of our Lord will be the perfect redemption of His disciples out of all tribulation (Luke xxi. 28), 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. 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. We here have a very solemn picture of what the *state* of the world will be when the Son of man returns.

So shall also the coming of the Son of man be. The days preceding His second advent, just as the days of Noah were the days preceding the flood. (See Luke xvii. 26, 27.) 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. In the days of Noah, the old world being entirely unaffected with the admonitions he gave them while building the ark, and with the threatenings which he then denounced, went on as usual, following their ordinary occupations, and pursuing their pleasures, both lawful and unlawful, in great security, even until the point of time when Noah took possession of the ark. The consequence was, that, ere they were aware, the flood came and destroyed all except those who were in the ark. It is thus plainly taught that the coming of Jesus will be unlooked for by the mass of mankind.

40. Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41. Two women shall be grinding at a mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.—Luke xvii. 34, &c.

In the field, pursuing their daily labor. Two women, &c. Corn was then ground, as it still is in the East, by a hand-mill, and generally by women. (See Ex. xi. 5, also Isaiah xlvi. 2.) The Saviour in these verses strengthens His admonitions 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. Two—one is a Christian, the other is a sinner. One of the men may have just vented his profane oaths, while the other may have reproved him,

and reminded him of the future judgment. Both women may that morning have sung the same hymn, but one was an humble believer, and the other a lover of the world. Men save and lose their souls in all places, states, and conditions. Some are lost while laboring for the necessaries of life, by allowing the noise and hurry of their employments to hinder them from hearing the voice of God and the warnings of approaching calamity.

42. \*Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.  
\*Chap. xxv. 13; Mark xiii. 33, &c.; Luke xxi. 36.

Be wakeful, vigilant, 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. (See Luke xii. 40.) He who made us is acquainted with all the secret springs of our nature. He knows that when we have a long time before us we are disposed to loiter. There is a spirit of sloth and delay that steals over our hearts, which nothing overcomes so much as the idea that the opportunity for exertion may soon be past. The coming here referred to is the same as in verse 39. We must not be like the world in the time of the flood, slumbering and revelling, but watch, for it will be a sudden event. (Heb. x. 37.) Christians are to be frequent in prayer, and continually in a prayerful frame of mind. (See Luke xviii. 1.) Watching and praying are here joined together, as in Matt. xxvi. 41, 1 Peter iv. 7, 8.

43. † But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.  
\*Luke xii. 39; 1 Thes. 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. In the northern parts of Great Britain the master of the house is still called "*the good man of the house*," and the mistress "*the good woman*." *Had known*, &c.—had been warned, as you are warned; especially if he had known in *what watch* the thief would come, he would have kept watch against his approach, and *not have suffered his house to be broken up*, *i. e.*, 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 Thes. 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.

44. \*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.  
\*Chap. xxv. 13; 1 Thes. v. 6.

*Therefore, i. e.*, because your situation is like that of the householder, in the sudden and unexpected test to which your watchfulness will be put. (See on verse 42.) *Be ye also ready*. Be in a state of constant readiness. *For in such an hour, &c.* The individual death is the virtual coming of the Son of man here is death, nor truly to be identified with death, but the being on the watch for judgment is pressed instead of the being on the watch for death, inasmuch as death is nothing but a passage to judgment. This is a point which our blessed Master frequently presses upon our notice. Christians should strive to be always on their guard. They should behave like the sentinel of an army in an enemy's land. They should resolve by God's grace not to sleep at their post. (1 Thes. v. 6.)

45. \*Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?  
\*Luke xii. 42; Acts xx. 23; 1 Cor. iv. 2; Heb. iii. 5.

*Who then, &c.*—whoever, and whenever, and wherever he is? This question the Lord asked in order to arouse and exhort every one to ask himself the question, *Is it I?* 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. We must be faithful in performing the duties of our state in the time of our life, if we would be found at that of death employed in the work which God has committed to our care. Observe here two main qualities in a pastor. 1. Fidelity in not appropriating to himself the gifts of God, as time, talents, &c. 2. Prudence in



employing them to the profit of his household, which is the church. Whoever remembers that he is only a steward, is far from desiring to command and dispose of everything as master. God will be served in His own way, not in ours. *To give them meat, &c.* 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." It is a great part of pastoral prudence to give the proper portion, and to do it in due season.

46. *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* 47. *Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.*  
†Rev. xvi. 15. †Chap. xxv. 2; Luke xxii. 29.

*So doing.* This refers to verse 45, where the Christian is represented as a faithful and wise servant, &c. This conduct includes 1. A diligent attention to our own spiritual concerns; 2. An anxiety for the welfare of others; 3. Zeal for the glory of God; 4. The happiness secured—"blessed" with all spiritual blessings in life and death, in time and eternity. Miserable then is he whom death surprises either doing evil or doing nothing, or doing that which God does not require of him. No one should ever quit his post of duty, either through discouragement, or idleness, or indifference. *Ruler over all his goods*, 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. The labor is great, but the reward is without measure. We should be able to comprehend it, could we comprehend all the riches of God, that is, God Himself.

48. *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49. And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50. The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall he be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*  
†Chap. viii. 12 and xxv. 30.

*That evil servant.* As no evil servant has previously been mentioned, the word *that* is to be explained by supposing an ellipsis: *But if that evil servant* (on the supposition

that he is evil) *shall say, &c. 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, &c.*—laying claim in arrogance and hard-heartedness to a right belonging to the lord. *Eat and drink with the drunken*, revelling upon that which has been withdrawn from others, and, at the same time, wickedly squandering the goods of his lord. Thousands are emboldened in sin by the idea that the Lord delayeth His coming. If the coming of our Lord to judgment were a living reality for the professors of Christianity, for which they looked, there would certainly not be so much strife, contention, bitterness, envy, ambition, domineering and revengefulness among the different branches of the Church and the members of the same Churches. (1 Cor. iv. 5.) Nor would there be so much luxury and extravagance in the Church; the contributions for the support of the preaching of the Gospel at home and abroad would be much more liberal.

*The lord of that servant shall come, &c.*—surprise him in his sin and false security. The Lord continually, by death, defeats such presumptuous calculations of the ungodly. *Cut him asunder*, means quarter him—the image of a very hard punishment at that time inflicted on certain offenders. It points to the punishment connected with the dividing asunder and laying open of the wicked heart. (Heb. iv. 13.) *Appoint him, &c., i. e.,* he shall have the same fate. The Lord will judge His servants according to the condition in which He finds them—no previous faithfulness shall compensate for negligence at the time. *There shall be weeping, &c.* (See on chap. viii. 12.) Were Jesus to come to-day in His chariot of clouds, should we be able to say, "we have waited for Him?" (Isa. xxv. 10.) Would He come to interrupt our pleasures, or to drown our hopes? to make us weep and gnash our teeth, or to wipe away all tears from our faces forever?

1. What did Jesus say to His disciples about the temple? 2. How did He answer the question, "when shall these things be?" 3. What wars were referred to? 4. What is said in reference to famines, &c.? 5. What effect was abounding iniquity to have? 6. What was "the abomination of desolation?" 7. Explain the injunctions in verses 17, 18, 19, 20. 8. How is the coming of the Son of man to be like the lightning? 9. How are we to understand verse 23? 10. What does the parable of the fig-tree teach? 11. What is said of "that day and hour?" 12. How is Christ's coming to be "as the days of Noe?" 13. What duty is enjoined in verse 42? 14. Who is the "faithful and wise servant?" 15. Who is "that evil servant?" 16. What is to be his doom?

## CHAPTER XXV.

1. *The parable of the ten virgins, 14 and of the talents.*  
31. *Also the description of the last judgment.*

**T**HEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

<sup>a</sup>Eph. v. 29, 30; Rev. xix. 7, xxi. 2, 9.

The circumstances of a marriage which furnish the groundwork of this parable, form an exact and literal representation of the customs which, in ancient times, generally prevailed in the East on such joyous occasions, and which hold in full force to the present day.

*Then*—at the time spoken of in the preceding chapter, namely, the "coming of the Son of man." *The kingdom of heaven*,—the kingdom as it appears outwardly before men in this dispensation. The visible Church on earth will "then be likened," &c. *Ten*. In the Jewish Church ten persons were required to constitute a valid synagogue. Probably this number was here selected because it was most familiar to the Jews in their varied ecclesiastical and political economies. No symbolic character should be attributed to the *virgins*, as such; it is when they take their lamps and go forth to meet the bridegroom that they first acquire a spiritual significance. The whole group represent that portion of any community who hear the Gospel, accept its terms, and profess to be the disciples of Christ. The sincerity and depth of their profession will be tested afterward. *Took their lamps, &c.* Marriages were always celebrated in the evening, or at night. (Judg. xiv. 11, 18; 1 Sam. xxv. 42.) The taking their lamps and going forth to meet the bridegroom, represents an open, intelligent and seemly profession of faith in Christ. *Bridegroom*. The Church is "the Lamb's wife"—the union which faith forms between Christ and His people being represented as a mar-

riage. (See Ps. xlv. 13-15; Cant. i. 5, 6, viii. 13, 14; John iii. 27-36; 2 Cor. xi. 1-6; Rev. xix. 7, 8, xxi. 1-4.) The image which our Lord uses here, raises such joyous expectations as are sufficient to divest of their terror all the frightful circumstances with which His coming is also connected. Believers under the Old Testament looked for the coming of Messiah. (Isa. lx. 1, &c., lxiv. 1; Luke ii. 25.) Believers under the New Testament look for His second coming. (Phil. iii. 21; Heb. ix. 28; Tit. ii. 11, &c.) This expectation is a powerful means, in the hands of God, for raising and sanctifying the heart. It springs out of faith in the promises of the Lord (Matt. xxv. 31; John xiv. 3, xvii. 24; Acts i. 9-11), and is at once the proof and nourishment of love to Him. (Col. iii. 1, &c.; 1 Peter i. 8.)

<sup>2</sup> And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.  
<sup>b</sup> Chap. xiii. 47, xxii. 10.

*Five, &c.* The number is of no moment to the point in question, the distinction alone is essential. It is not a distinction of the head, but a distinction of the heart. The "wise" are called so, because they kept steadily in view the end and the means, thought of the future with foresight, and, during the present, held in contemplation distant possible contingencies, all which the "foolish" did not. Christians are "wise unto salvation," mere professors have "their foolish hearts hardened." It is not to be inferred from this, we think, that half the human family shall be lost, and that half shall be saved. We must never wring from every incident in a parable, distinct and specific meaning.

<sup>3</sup> They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

The *lamps* used on such occasions were probably flambeaux or torches. They consisted of small bars of iron or brass inserted

into a stick, to which were fastened small pieces of linen or lint, or other substance, which of itself burned, but required to be supplied from another vessel with oil, in order to make the burning bright and permanent. Verse 4 shows that the oil was in another vessel, and not in the lamp itself. The persons whom the foolish virgins represent are not hypocrites, not self-conscious dissemblers, much less the openly profane and ungodly, but the negligent in prayer, the slothful in work, such as lay out their scheme for a Christian life to satisfy the eyes of men, and not to please God, who seeth in secret. They have, in some degree, experienced convictions, and they have made professions, but their profession does not proceed from any experience, or full-wrought conviction of the truth and Divinity of the Gospel. They are eager to "go forth," but have "no oil with them," no grace in their heart.

4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

*Vessels.* (See on verse 3.) *Oil.* This points to the Holy Spirit as a spirit of grace and supplication dwelling in a believer's heart. (2. Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20, 27, &c.) The persons whom the "wise" represent, have passed from death unto life; they have received their new life through the Spirit's ministry, and it is "hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) From this source they have an unfailling supply. They foresee that they may have a long life to live of toil and self-denial, before they shall be called to cease from their labors, before the kingdom shall come unto them, and consequently feel that it is not a few warm, excited feelings which will carry them successfully through all this—which will enable them to endure unto the end.

5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.—1 Thes. v. 6.

*Bridegroom.* (See on verse 1.) *Tarried,* not really, for Christ's day of arrival is absolutely fixed, but it seemed to them as if He tarried—the time appeared longer than they expected. Here was a hint from our Lord that the time of His return might be delayed beyond the expectation of His first disciples. If more than a hint had been given, if Jesus had said plainly

that He would not come for many centuries, then the first ages of the Church would have been placed in a disadvantageous position, being deprived of that powerful motive to holiness and diligence supplied to each generation of the faithful, by the possibility of the Lord's return in their time. It is a necessary element of the doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ, that it should be possible at any time, that no generation should consider it improbable in theirs.

*All slumbered and slept.* It certainly was not our Lord's design to represent the wise virgins as sinking along with others into carnal security, indifference and slothfulness. This would have been to disfigure the image He was drawing of Christian wisdom by a leading characteristic of folly. The trait referred to is, we think, simply an indication of the long delay of the bridegroom, which naturally led the virgins to fall into other employments than those immediately connected with the expected festivity. So, in regard to the second coming of Christ, though the great object of the Church's hopes, yet it was to be so long deferred, as to render it both allowable and necessary for her members to mingle in employment not immediately connected with His advent. His people, as well as others, must betake themselves to the cares and business of life—must enter into occupations, which, in themselves, are no way connected with Christ's appearing, but, while amidst these, work and business of their Christian calling, the holy oil of Divine truth and the Divine Spirit still abides in the heart of real Christians, and shines forth in their conduct; and all they have to do, when called to meet their Lord, is just to recall their minds from their other necessary duties, and address themselves more immediately to the work of meeting, in a suitable manner, the presence and glory of their Divine Master. Still, it is true, that the delay of Christ is, alas, often the occasion of a diminution of watchfulness, fervor and activity, even on the part of true disciples. Against such a tendency Christians should prayerfully guard.

6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, so ye out to meet him.

<sup>d</sup>Chap. xxiv. 31; 1 Thes. iv. 16.

The parties being united, the bride, preceded by her virgin attendants with lighted torches, was conducted to the house of the bridegroom's father. This *cry* we may suppose to have been made either by a part of the retinue running before, or by the applauding multitude, who, even till that late hour, had been waiting to see the passage of the procession through the streets, and thus testified their lively sympathy in what was going forward. *Midnight.* Jesus may come much later than was expected, but He is true and faithful. (2 Peter iii. 3.) His coming is sudden. Every stroke which our pulse beats, strikes the knell of a passing soul. There are sixty human lives go out every minute. But while that is the average number, death, each day, like the tide, has its flow and ebb. As harmonizing with its gloomy scenes, night is the most common period for dying. She throws her sable veil over the appalling features of life's last struggle. (1 Thes. iv. 16, v. 2.) *The bridegroom cometh.* Such rousing cries in the Church of God, and in the lives of individuals, are often found in great outward changes, national judgments, desolations, diseases, extreme dangers, extraordinary deliverances, and other solemn occurrences, through means of which zealous and godly Christians, as well as those who are lukewarm and ungodly, are constrained to think of the coming of the Son of man as near at hand.

7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.—Luke xii. 35.

*All—arose.* There is no visible distinction at this stage between those who have only a name that they live, and those who have attained also the new nature. When life is closing behind, and eternity opening before us, we are all aroused. Every one who has a lamp hastens then to examine its condition and stimulate its flame; all who have borne Christ's name search themselves to see whether they are ready for His presence.

8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

Many put off the examination of the very grounds of their faith and hope to the last moment. When the day of Christ comes, it will be impossible for any to remain ignorant any longer of his true state. *Give us, &c.,* that is, permit us to have an

interest in your faith. Here is a representation of those formalists, who, if they are Catholics, betake themselves to the dead saints, or if they are Protestants, to the living, whom they have been accustomed to revere as their guides on account of their wisdom and grace, and plead, Help us, comfort us, pray for us, that we may be brought into a state of grace. *Our lamps are gone out,* rather, as in the margin, "are going out," for oil will not light an extinguished lamp, though it will keep a burning one from going out. Ah! now, at length, they have discovered not only their folly, but the wisdom of the other class, and they do homage to it. They did not, perhaps, despise them before, but they thought them righteous overmuch, now they are forced, with bitter mortification, to wish they were like them. There is a devotion which is temporary, and a devotion which is real and permanent. That devotion which is not sustained by truth and holiness is necessarily transient, and when it is wanted most, is found most to fail. It will be observed that the foolish virgins applied to the wise ones, not to the Fountain Himself. It can scarcely be doubted that if they had ever truly known the bridegroom, they would have applied to Him instead of their companions.

9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.  
Ps. xlix. 7; Jer. xv. 1; Ezek. xiv. 14, xvi. 18.

*Not so.* These words are supplied in our translation. They are omitted in the original, as the ancients felt a sort of shame or delicacy in denying a request, and the clause which follows marks with sufficient clearness the denial. *Lest there be not, &c.* Here is a striking denial of the Romish doctrine of supererogation, by which the merits of particular saints may by surplus save other persons. The righteous are "scarcely saved." After we have done all, we are "unprofitable servants." *Go ye rather, &c.* This counsel was the best that in the emergency could be given. "Sell" and "buy," mean simply, "Go, get in the only legitimate way." And yet the word "buy" is significant, for we are elsewhere bidden, "buy wine and milk without money and without price,"

and "buy of Christ gold tried in the fire," &c. (Isa. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 18.) Now, since what we pay the demanded price for becomes thereby *our own property*, the salvation which we thus take gratuitously at God's hands, being bought in His own sense of that word, becomes ours thereby in inalienable possession. (See Prov. xxiii. 23; Matt. xiii. 44.) This feature of the parable intimates that those who are found destitute at the coming of the Lord, enjoyed their day and their opportunity, but neglected them. Christians may tell the person who wants grace where it is to be had; they may direct him to the fountain out of which he may draw; but no priest, or person, no minister or man of any denomination can communicate grace—the Lord the Spirit alone can bestow it.

10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.—Luke xiii. 25.

*Went to buy, &c.* There is no forgiveness to be had at the judgment day—the throne of grace is superseded by the throne of judgment, the cross is then veiled, the fountain for uncleanness is then sealed, the sun of grace has then set. *They that were ready*, or prepared, viz.: the wise virgins. *Went in, &c.* The Greek word rendered *marriage*, rather means, "the apartment in which the marriage feast was kept," or the house where the marriage was celebrated. The marriage *ceremony* took place before the bride left her father's house, but a feast was given at the house of her husband, and which was also called the *marriage*, or a part of the marriage solemnities. *Door was shut*—shut as much for the security and joy without interruption of those within, as for the lasting exclusion of those without. (See Gen. vii. 16; Rev. iii. 1, 2, also xix. 7, xxi. 27.) What door? The door that has now engraved on its lintels, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out"—the door which is now open, and so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, and yet so holy that no sin shall be tolerated within it.

11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.—Chap. vii. 21-23.

*Afterward came, &c.* Not that they have now found the oil, but having sought it in vain they come looking for mercy, when now it is the time of judgment. *Lord,*

*Lord.* Now, at length, they realize all the consequences of their past folly. In addressing the bridegroom, *Lord*, they claim to stand in a near relation to him, and their repeating it is an evidence of the earnestness with which they now claim admission. *Open to us.* So that no one can then claim or take away anything for himself, it must be given him by Christ. Many professing Christians care nothing about decided Christianity. But they will experience an entire change of opinion in regard to its necessity, when, alas, it is too late.

12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. <sup>1</sup>Ps. v. 5; Hab. i. 13; John ix. 31.

The word *know* here is used in a somewhat peculiar sense; it is equivalent to acknowledge or approve, a sense of the term of not unfrequent occurrence in Scripture. "The Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous," Ps. i. 6, *i. e.*, He approves, and gives tokens of His approval of their way. "You only have I *known* of all the nations of the earth" (Amos iii. 2), *i. e.*, acknowledged as my peculiar people. "I *know*"—acknowledge—"my sheep, and am *known*"—acknowledged—"of mine." "As the Father *knoweth*"—acknowledgeth—"me, even so *know*"—acknowledge—"I the Father." (John x. 14, 15.) The words *I know you not*, just show that they never *knew* Christ, that there had never been anything save a barren lifeless calling Him "Lord, Lord," and that now, though *seeking* to enter in, they "shall not be able."

13. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xxiv. 42, 44; Mark xiii. 33; Luke xxi. 36; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 1 Thes. v. 6; 1 Peter v. 8; Rev. xvi. 15.

*Watch therefore.* (See on chap. xxiv. 42, 44.) The spiritual watchfulness, or preparedness of the Christian, is that state of mind wherein one is truly conscious to himself of his actual condition, of the aim and tendency of his life, of his relation to the Redeemer and the things of this life, and everything is so applied and used as to be of service to us for our eternal salvation. The ground of this watchfulness is our ignorance of the exact time for the coming and manifestation of Christ, which uncertainty or ignorance true believers improve to their salvation. *Lord,*

14. <sup>1</sup>For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

<sup>2</sup>Mark xiii. 34; Luke xix. 12-27. <sup>3</sup>Chap. xxi. 33.

This parable and that of the talents, in Luke xix. 11-27, are not, as some have regarded them, one and the same, although in many of their features there is a strong resemblance. *That* was spoken in the house of Zaccheus, *this* on the Mount of Olives. *That* was addressed to a mixed multitude, *this* to Christ's own immediate disciples. Other points of difference will reveal themselves on examination.

The words *kingdom of heaven*, are evidently to be supplied from verse 1. The *man* is the Son of man, a name that appropriately expresses the relationship of Jesus to us, and our relationship to Him. Christ, as Lord of this kingdom, will act toward those who have come in connection with Him, just as a rich man does with his servants. The *far country*, here, is that called by Isaiah "the land that is afar off"—the holy place, from which sin has projected us to an almost infinite distance. Christ's continued presence, spiritually, with His people, is not inconsistent with this representation, for the parable deals with the bodily and the visible.

*Who called his own servants, &c.* Slaves in antiquity, in many parts of the East, were often artisans, or were allowed otherwise to engage freely in business, paying, as it was frequently arranged, a fixed yearly sum to their master, or, as here, they had money committed to them wherewith to trade on his account, or with which to enlarge their business, and to bring him in a share of the profits. *Delivered, divided, unto them his goods.* So, also, has Christ bestowed many gifts upon His servants; in particular, He assigned to His Apostles an appointed sphere of labor, and still now gives life, health, powers of body and of soul, many talents, capacities, spheres of duty, and opportunities for action. There is here indicated the relation of entire dependence in which we stand to Christ, as servants to their Lord.

15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, <sup>1</sup>to every man according to his several ability: and straightway took his journey.

<sup>2</sup>Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 7, 11, 29; Eph. iv. 11.

In this distribution different amounts are consigned to different persons. Here the representation obviously accords with

the fact: of time, of intellect, of health, of learning, of wealth, scarcely any two persons possess a precisely equal portion. *To every man according to his several ability.* The master, at the moment of his departure, graduated his gifts according to the abilities and acquirements of the servants, that he might not throw a great responsibility on a weak man, or leave a man of vigor only half employed. This shows, probably, that while all the gifts that a man possesses are bestowed by God, some, such as bodily constitution and mental capacity, are conferred by God, as governor of the world, while others are subsequently conferred by the Lord Jesus, as the king and head of the Church. We are inclined to understand these latter gifts by the goods which the master bestowed on the eve of his departure.

Through the unequal distribution of manifold gifts, the Church of the Lord appears like a body composed of many members, every one of which must contribute to the good of the whole, according to the part assigned, and the capacity bestowed on it. (1 Cor. xii. 4-30; Rom. xii. 4-9.) There is not a power, nor a possession, nor a privilege that we enjoy, that is not a talent, and there is not a talent, minute or otherwise, which may not be sanctified to the Master's use, and devoted to His glory. God does not tell the man who has two talents to beg for five, nor the man who has one to ask for two, nor does He say that the one who has two should produce as much as the man who has five. He only asks for the vigorous use of that which we have, and on that vigorous and prayerful use He will bestow His blessing.

*And straightway took his journey.* See Chapter xxi. 33, where the same departure is ascribed to God, after setting up the ancient economy. In both cases, it denotes the leaving of men to the action of all those spiritual laws and influences of Heaven, under which they have been graciously placed for their own salvation, and the advancement of their Lord's kingdom.

16. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

The goodness of the giver, as expressed in the gifts received, kindled gratitude in the first two servants. They felt a responsibility, but a joyful responsibility. They, therefore, turned their talents to account. Their gain and increase of goods stand in exact proportion to the sums committed to them. The talents doubled, are just good fruit springing from active, diligent use of opportunity to serve Christ. Although the first of these servants did absolutely more for Christ and the world than the second, both were equally diligent and faithful according to their means. Examples, both of the likeness and the difference, occur by hundreds, day by day, before our eyes. (See Luke xii. 48.)

*He that had received one, went and digged,* &c. This was not the case because his talent differed from that of others, and was therefore incapable of increase, or because he had no opportunity of turning it to account, or no inherent energy of action able to do so, or because he had no intelligible instructions, for this is not pleaded. Christ distributes in the exercise of sovereignty, and each is responsible, not for the amount he receives, but only for the practical use to which he turns that which he has received. It was not, let it be observed, a sinful prodigality, or a bad use of the lent talent, which served for the condemnation of this servant, but only his slothful indifference, that he had not employed it either for himself or for others.

19. After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

*Long time.* The time is not long in the account of the Lord himself: his latest warning to the Church is, "Behold I come quickly," and with him a thousand years are as one day. Nor is the time long to ungodly men, for in such an hour as they think not, the Son of man cometh. At whatever time He comes, He comes too soon for them who would give all the world, if it were theirs, that He should not come at all. When Jesus comes, He will take account of all that has passed during His absence, whether it be good or bad. He will reckon with His servants, that thus His sentence may appear before all the world as conformable to the strictest principle of righteousness.

20. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. \*Chap. xxiv. 47, verses 24, 36: Luke xii. 44, xxii. 29, 30. †2 Tim. i. 12; Heb. xii. 27; 1 Peter i. 8.

*He that had received five talents came,* &c. In the joyful coming forward of the faithful servants, we see an example of boldness in the day of judgment. (See 1 John iv. 17, ii. 28.) They had something to show, as Paul so earnestly desired that he might have. (1 Thes. ii. 19; 2 Cor. i. 14; Phil. iv. 1.) *Behold I have gained,* &c. Grace bestowed, and diligence inspired by grace, gained. Observe that here the phrase, "*I have gained,*" is preceded by the words, "*thou deliveredst unto me,*"—it is only *thy* gift which I have so multiplied. Whereunto we have attained, and whatsoever we have gained, are entirely from first to last, by the distinguishing grace of Him who makes us to differ, and who gives us grace to put our talents to their legitimate and proper use.

*Well done thou good and faithful servant.* We should not study to please men so much as to please God. If we please Him, we shall please all who love Him; and, as to others, they are not on any account worthy of being pleased at the expense of displeasing God. The term "good" stands opposed to "unprofitable." A good and faithful servant. True, we cannot profit Christ absolutely, but we may relatively; He has an interest in the world, and we may profit that—a people, and we may profit them; and He will consider anything done to them for His sake as done to Him. It is not enough that we do no harm, as is evident from the case of the servant, who was not cast out for what he did, but for *not* doing what he ought to have done (verses 24–30), we must be *faithful* servants, diligent, conscientious, persevering. We are not required to be *successful*; our Lord and Master was not very successful, but he was faithful, and so must we all be in our respective spheres.

*Thou hast been faithful over a few things.* He calls, even the highest, the richest and most honorable gifts, which He bestows here, a *few things*, in order to raise our expectations the more concerning the much greater and more glorious things

which He has reserved for His people hereafter, and so to fill our hearts with blessed hopes, as well as admonish us to a conscientious fidelity. It often happens, that labor spent on what is little brings great glory. The minister who has only a small congregation, consisting of a few people, and these chiefly poor, and this for many years to come, should think often of the commendation of our Lord here given. Instead of being anxious for a large charge, he has reason to tremble lest he should be found unfaithful in that which he has.

*I will make thee ruler, &c.* Christ will at the last show greater confidence in His faithful servants than ever. They will have a glorious augmentation of honor and blessedness. The language is figurative. The idea conveyed is evidently this: that a faithful discharge of the trust committed to us in this world will, through Divine grace, contribute to our honor and blessedness in the world to come. All will not have an equal degree of happiness in heaven. All will be perfectly happy, but some will not have so large a capacity for happiness as others. Every vessel will be full, but some vessels will contain more than others. Paul must enjoy more in heaven than a soul caught up from infancy, since part of the happiness of heaven will consist of remembrance of the past.

*Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* So the Lord Jesus shall, as it were, call his people "no longer servants, but friends" (John xv. 15; Luke xii. 37; Rev. iii. 20); bring them into such close and intimate union with Himself as they never had before—cause them to sit down with Him at the feast prepared to celebrate His return, and so make them partakers of the joy which will satisfy Him, as He sees the fruit of the travail of His soul.

22. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.—Verse 21.

*Well done, &c.* We are to notice that the servant who had received *two talents*, was addressed in precisely the same terms of commendation as he who had received five. He had doubled his money, and

was, therefore, equally as faithful as the one who had received the greater amount. In distributing His commendations, the Lord looks more to the honest heart, the approved fidelity and tender conscientiousness, than to the greater or less result of the activity of his servants (2 Cor. viii. 12). For explanation of these verses, see notes on verses 20, 21.

24. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed: 25. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.  
Job xxi. 14, 16; Isa. lviii. 3, Jer. ii. 31, Ezek. xviii. 25, 29, Mal. i. 12; Luke xix. 20, 22.

*He which had received the one talent.* "Our Lord placed the example of negligence in him to whom the least was committed, probably to intimate," says *Doddridge*, "that we are accountable for the *smallest* with which we are entrusted; but it cannot imply that they who have received *much* will ordinarily pass their account *best*, for it is too plain, in fact, that most of those whose dignity, wealth and genius give them the greatest opportunities of service, seem to forget that they have a Master in heaven to serve, or any future reckoning to expect, and many render themselves much more criminal than this wicked and slothful servant, who hid his talent in the earth." *Lord, I knew thee, &c.* The faithless and unconscientious servant, when called to give his account, tries to defend himself. It would have been better had he been led before this to a conviction of his guilt and liability to punishment, as he might have been, either through the example of his good fellow-servants, or through the knowledge he had of his lord's will. *A hard man*—an avaricious person, who allows himself to be drawn away by avarice and greed into unrighteousness. But the conduct of the lord toward him, verse 15, was an indication of good feeling, and, therefore, manifested the groundlessness of his subterfuge.

*Reaping, &c.*, that is, requiring more of us than thou givest us power to perform. *And I was afraid, &c.* The other servants did not regard the lord as a hard master, but as a good master. Think of God as your Father and your Benefactor, and you will serve Him joyously as a child. Think of God as a hard task-master, and you will



either serve Him as a slave, or you will give up serving in despair.

*Thou hast that is thine.* Let it be observed that this servant's disobedience was not active, but passive; he did not positively injure his master's property, he simply failed to turn it to, profitable account. His action seems that of one anxious that the gift should not be missed or lost, but ready to be returned, just as he got it. His terror was too lively to admit of his enjoying a debauch purchased by the treasure which had been placed under his charge. Fear is a powerful motive in certain directions and for certain effects; it makes itself felt in the heart, and leaves its mark on the life of a man. Like frost, it has power to arrest the stream of energy, and fix it cold, stiff, motionless. Only love can, like the sun of summer, break the chains and set the prisoner free to run his way rejoicing.

26. His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed: 27. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*

*Thou wicked and slothful servant, &c.* What this servant had contrived for his justification, the Lord applies to his confusion. "If you knew I was such, instead of that being an argument against the use of this talent, it was only a stronger argument for your use of it."

*Exchangers.* These discharged not only the offices of our *bankers* in receiving and giving out money, and giving interest upon it, but also, in exchanging coins, and distinguishing genuine from forged money. *With usury, i. e., with interest.* Anciently the import of the word *usury* was no other than profit, whether great or small, allowed to the lender for the use of borrowed money. As this practice often gave rise to great extortion, the very name at length became odious. A German critic makes the remark on this: "Thus timid natures, that are not suited to independent labors in the kingdom of God, are here counseled at least to attach themselves to stronger characters, under whose leading they may lay out their gifts to the service of the Church." Let it be noted that as in the parable of the ten virgins, the five foolish set forth those who are rejected at last because they think too lightly of the re-

quirements of the of the Lord; so here, on the other hand, this servant represents those who are rejected because they think too hardly of His commands. Our Lord touches the root from which both these spring, "*wickedness and sloth.*" "Slothful" is added to mark the precise nature of the wickedness. We have here this very solemn truth pressed upon us, that the judge who will reckon with us will not be satisfied with the plea that we have *done no harm* (which plea, however, *never* can be substantiated), but He will equally condemn on the ground of our having *done no good.* It will be our ruin merely to bury, amid the cares and pleasures of life, our opportunities of serving Christ. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." (Luke xvi. 10.)

28. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

*Take therefore, &c.* This deprivation may be considered partly as directly penal, and partly as the *natural* consequence of his sloth. There is an analogy between the course of things in the natural and in the spiritual world. A limb which is never called into exercise loses its strength by degrees; its muscles and sinews disappear. The disuse of any faculty of the mind gradually but surely diminishes or destroys its power. Corn kept hoarded up in the granary is soon destroyed, scattered on the earth and in good soil, it grows up into a golden harvest. Even so the gifts of God, unexercised, fade and fail from us. Hence, to waste life in the hope of getting all made right by an energetic repentance at the close, is a very foolish and mischievous species of superstition; it is the exercise of a very strong faith, without any promise from God on which it may lean.

*And give it unto him which hath ten talents.* A deep and precious truth lies under this. The man who had received *five* talents got that number "*according to his ability.*" By having another talent given him at last, is intimated that his "*ability*" has become greater than it was before. And so it will be, indeed, with the faithful servant who shall enter into his Master's joy in heaven. His ability, his capacity, his power, will be gloriously increased and enlarged, and still "*according to that ability*" will his

Divine Master place within his reach increased and enlarged opportunities of serving Him. (See on verse 29.)

<sup>29.</sup> For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. xiii. 12; Mark iv. 25; Luke viii. 18, xix. 26; John xv. 2.

*Unto every one that hath*—every one that has rightly employed what was committed to him; exercised his gift with the required diligence, fidelity and conscientiousness. *Shall be given*, &c. It is not merely that 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 talent taken from the other, while on his part, another takes *his* crown. 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; see on Luke viii. 18, xix. 26.)

*From him that hath not*, &c. From him who, wanting diligence and carefulness, has not therefore rightly executed the trust committed to him, *shall be taken away even that which he hath*—the just desert of his guilt (Luke xvi. 10-12), and a judgment demanded alike by the wisdom and righteousness of God. The hand of diligence makes rich. The way to accumulate is dispersion.

<sup>30.</sup> And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall he be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>1</sup>Chap. viii. 12, xxiv. 51.

It will be noticed that the reward of unfaithfulness is, "take the talent from him and cast him out." In both parts the sentence of condemnation corresponds to its opposite in the reception of those who had been faithful to their trust. These retain their employed gifts, from him the unused talent is taken away. These are received into their master's favor, he is cast out of his master's sight. The sentence, "take it from him," goes before the sentence, "cast him out." A sinner is given over to himself, before he is given up to judgment. The first prepares the way for the second death; the process is now going on by which the destiny is decided. Now is the accepted time, now either salvation or condemnation is wrought out. *Unprofitable servant*—literally, *useless*, worthless, bad. (See on verses 25, 27.) *Outer dark-*

*ness*, &c. (See on chap. viii. 12.) This is the consummation of judgment. Loss of all further means of Divine favor, and rejection from the life and glory of the Divine presence.

<sup>31.</sup> ¶ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

<sup>1</sup>Zech. xiv. 5; chap. xvi. 27, xix. 28; Mark. viii. 38; Acts i. 11.

Truthfully has it been said that if this scene, here described, does not describe a personal, public, final judgment on men, according to the treatment they have given Christ, we shall have to consider again whether our Lord's teaching on the greatest themes of human interest, does indeed possess that incomparable simplicity and transparency of meaning which, by universal consent, has been ascribed to it. *When the Son of man*, &c. In connection with the majesty and grandeur of His appearance on this great and awful occasion, our Lord speaks of Himself as the Son of man. It is not in His Divine character alone that He is to act as final Judge, but as God manifest in the flesh, the humble, despised Jesus of Nazareth. Hence we see the reason why the Father is said to have committed all judgment to the Son. (John v. 22.) As Mediator He is officially subordinate to the Father, and His office as final Judge is a delegated and not an independent one.

*In his glory*. These words say more than the "with power and great glory," of chap. xxiv. 30. The Messiah is here represented as a king coming in royal state. *All the holy angels with him*. As kings, on great and special occasions, make their appearance attended by their high officers, so the Messiah will come to judgment, attended by holy angels as ministers of His will. (Mark viii. 38; 2 Thes. i. 7; Rev. v. 11.) *Upon the throne of his glory*—the glory of His judicial authority.

<sup>32.</sup> And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

<sup>1</sup>Rom. xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. xx. 12. <sup>2</sup>Ezek. xx. 38, xxxiv. 17, 20; chap. xlii. 49.

*Before him shall be gathered all nations*. All nations are now before Him, and ever have been. He sees them, He sustains them, He speaks to them by His Providence and His Word. But millions have

denied His very existence, and millions more have lived in utter indifference to His claims; but now all nations are brought into *conscious* contact with Him. The blaspheming atheist, the cruel idolater, the degraded savage, the foul apostate, and the hardened worldling, will feel His presence more intensely than Isaiah did when he fell down and cried, *Woe is me!*

*And he shall separate them one from another.* The judgment will be simultaneous: all will be judged together. Reason might probably have supposed that every one would be judged separately at the time of his death. But God has reasons for a public judgment: God must not only do right, but be known to do right. Though every one at death enters the region either of happiness or despair, yet it is fit there should be a day prefigured by the day of visitation at the deluge, at Sodom, and at Jerusalem, a day for the gathering of all men to their own class, as either righteous or wicked. This arrangement, if not necessary, is expedient for the illustration of the Divine justice; thus all may be convinced of the fitness, not only of their own retribution, but of that of others also. If the "day" designated in Scripture for the judgment should seem to us too brief, in view of the immensity of the subject and the multitude of persons concerned, it should be recollected that this term denotes "a portion of duration set apart for this purpose," and that God can in a moment let in such light as would equal what, according to our present ideas, it would require eternity to disclose, just as our Saviour could, in a few moments, impress on the woman of Samaria such a sense of His Omniscience, that she went away declaring "He had told her all that she ever did."

*Sheep*, representing the righteous, because of their innocence and harmlessness, and their being objects of the tenderest care of the shepherd, as well as the imitators of Christ in His benevolence. (Chap. xviii. 12, 13; John x. 11, 14.) *On his right hand*—the side of honor. (1 Kings ii. 19; Ps. xlv. 9, cx. 1, &c.) *But the goats on the left*—the wicked shall be on the side, consequently, of dishonor.

34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

†Rom. viii. 17; †Peter i. 4, 9, iii. 9; Rev. xxi. 7. †Chap. xx. 23; Mark x. 40; †1 Cor. ii. 9; Heb. xi. 16.

*Then shall the King.* Magnificent title! here for the first and only time, save in parabolical language, given to Himself by the Lord Jesus, and that on the eve of His deepest humiliation! It is to intimate that in then addressing the heirs of the kingdom He will put on all His regal majesty. *Then.* Here Christians walk by faith, not by sight. Now they sow in tears, then they will reap in joy. Now they run, then they obtain the prize. Now they fight the good fight of faith, then they will lay hold on eternal life. *Say unto them on his right hand.* (See on verse 33.) *Come, &c.* This invitation will be given before He condemns the ungodly. Whenever our Lord describes the final judgment, He invariably lays down this order of proceeding. He does so three times over in this chapter. See the parables of the Virgins and the Talents. We may discern here the mercifulness of His nature. Judgment He calls His "strange work." He passes it by therefore till He has finished His accustomed, His more congenial and pleasant work. The word "come" gives new sweetness to all the rest of the invitation. It shows that Jesus when He calls us to heaven will not take His own departure to some other world, but dwell with His people in that splendid world forever. Not one of them will then so long to draw near to Christ, as Christ will long to have him near. He will lead His redeemed to their glory with greater joy than they will follow Him there.

*Ye blessed of my Father.* In what are they blessed of His Father? It must be something peculiar and distinguishing. What says the glowing thanksgiving of the Apostle? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ." He has redeemed them from the curse of the law, justified them from all things, called them by His grace, and prepared them for His presence.

*Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Every word is significant. *The manner of taking posses-*

*sion*: Not take as a reward, but *inherit*. A son inherits his father's property, not because the son is virtuous and excellent, but because he is the son. So, while we must be virtuous, good and moral, we inherit heaven, we do not purchase it. We inherit it as sons, whilst contemporaneously we serve God as His servants day and night. Going there as children and heirs, all that is in it is ours, and ours forever. The *reward*: Not a mansion, an estate, a city, a province, but a portion more extended and dignified, and suited to the highest ambition of the soul, a *kingdom*. The saints shall reign in heaven in magnificence, and liberty, and power. The *qualification*: *Prepared for you*. It was not a natural endowment, or an easy acquisition. How many things were to be removed, and how much was to be done and suffered by an agency and passiveness the most illustrious! "I go," said He, "to prepare a place for you;" and His ascension, death, obedience, incarnation, as well as the dispensations of His grace and providence, were all necessary to the full salvation of a soul. Heaven is accommodated to the nature of the saints, furnished for their happiness, and all things are ordered in it with a reference to their abode in it. The *earliness* of the provision: *Before the foundation of the world*. How impossible was it that we should be saved by works of righteousness that we had done! All was purposed, planned, promised, secured, not only without our desert, but without our desire, and ages and ages before our existence. The grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

35. \*For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36. \*Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38. When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39. Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, (Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

\*Isa. lviii. 7; Ezek. xviii. 7; James i. 27. \*Heb. xiii. 2; 3 John 5. \*James ii. 15, 16. \*2 Tim. i. 16. \*1 Chron. xxix. 14; Prov. xv. 33; Isa. lxi. 6. \*Prov. xiv. 31, xix. 17; chap. x. 42; Mark ix. 41; Heb. vi. 10.

The persons to whom the invitation (verse 34) will be given, are not described, all that is said of them is, that they are on the King's right hand. Three marks of these persons are given: 1. *They abounded*

*in good works*. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, &c. With great tenderness our Lord distinguishes them, not by what He has done for them, but by what they have done, and not what they have done for Him, though He speaks of it as such, but what they have done for one another. He recognizes them, not by their dispositions, but their actions, not merely by what they have believed or felt, or by any undefined state of mind, but by the deeds of charity they *have performed* for His name's sake in the passed away earth. 2. *They think nothing of their good works*. The surprise they express when they heard of them, proves this: *Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee, &c.* Here is humility and self-renunciation. This is more than a casting away of our own righteousness, it is feeling that we have no righteousness of our own to cast away. The self-righteous would do well to notice that here are men commended by Christ Himself for their good deeds, and yet can think of no deeds of theirs that are worthy of commendation.

3. *They are those whom the Father has blessed*. *Ye blessed of my Father*. Jesus, who, as we have just seen, appears to delight in keeping His own doings out of sight, in order to bring forward those of His people, now puts Himself aside again, and honors His Father. It was God the Father, who sent Him down to be their Saviour—who made Him a propitiation for their sins. He was only doing His Father's work when He gave Himself for them. It was the Father's grace that chose them, His mercy that pardoned them, His power that kept them, His love and pity that from beginning to end redeemed them. Passing over, therefore, all His own sufferings and doings, Jesus says, "Come ye blessed of my Father." (See on verse 34.)

*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, &c.* We have here an explanation of what was meant at verses 35, 36. So close is the union between Christ and His members, that He looks on whatever is done to them as done to Himself, and rewards accordingly. (Comp. chap. x. 42; see also Prov. xix. 17, and Acts ix. 4.) Jesus identifies Himself with the humblest object of charity, and

assumes that all mercy done by His followers is done to Him. He places an infinite value upon the least of their good or approvable acts.

41. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. 42. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; 43. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45. Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

<sup>41</sup>Ps. vi. 8; chap. vii. 23; Luke xiii. 27. <sup>42</sup>Chap. xiii. 40, 42. <sup>43</sup>2 Peter 4; Jude 6. <sup>44</sup>Prov. xiv. 31, xvii. 5; Zech. ii. 8; Acts ix. 5.

*On the left hand.* (See on verse 33.) *Depart from me.* What a contrast between this sentence and the invitation given to those on the right hand! (Verse 34.) *Ye cursed, i. e.,* accursed ones, doomed to punishment. The omission of the words, *of my Father*, which follow the word *blessed*, in verse 34, is noticeable, as showing that the condemnation or accursed condition of the wicked results from their own evil doings, while the salvation of the righteous is all of grace. *Everlasting fire.* (See on iii. 12, v. 22, x. 28; also verse 46.) These words are just the correlative of everlasting blessedness. Those who argue that the punishment of the lost is not eternal, ought to argue, with logical consistency, that the happiness of the saved is not eternal. How can the lost ever escape, seeing that punishment has no expiatory virtue or purifying power? It is impossible for a plain man to read God's word and come to any other conclusion than this: That if heaven is eternal, hell, also, is eternal. If the fire is "everlasting," there can be no place for annihilation, or for final restitution. (See on iii. 12, xiii. 42; 2 Thes. i. 9, &c.)

Observe, 1. The origin of the dreadful state here described. It was *prepared for the devil and his angels*. Yet, being prepared, the abode could receive any other rebels as well as they, and those who will join his party in our world, and do the works of the devil, as they have shared in the same sin, must share in the same suffering with him and his followers. Thus the sinner renders *their* place his *own*, as it is said of Judas, "he went to his own place." We see here plainly *why* sinners are destroyed; not because there was no

salvation for them, but because they neglected to *receive* good and *do* good. They are *cursed* because they *refused* to be *blessed*; they are *lost* because they *refused* to be *saved*. 2. The certainty. "Then shall he say." The denouncement is not an idle tale; it is not the offspring of the nursery, or the creation of priestcraft. The consciences of men tell them this, and much more, frequently and seriously, than they are willing to acknowledge.

*They also answer him.* How different their spirit of exculpation from the humility and sense of unworthiness manifested by the righteous. These wicked persons had never in their whole lives exhibited any love to Christ or His people. Yet they imagine that because they had not treated Him with personal neglect, having had no opportunity of doing so, they are guiltless of the charge here brought against them. *When saw we thee an hungred, &c.* "It is true we did despise the sorrows of Thy brethren, but we saw nothing in them but trembling limbs, decrepitude, meanness and poverty; we saw nothing of that glorious power of Thine, and how could we suppose there was any alliance with Thee, the Lord of glory?" *Least of these* refers here, as in verse 40, to the righteous. *Ye did it not to me.* Christ here imputes an infinite demerit to their character and conduct. All their sins of omission and commission were against the very person of Him—of Him, (the incarnation of the infinite mercy of God. By the infinite dignity of His person does He measure the infinite demerit of their sin. Hence eternity alone can measure the length of their penalty.

46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

<sup>46</sup>Dan. xii. 2; John v. 29; Rom. ii. 7, &c.

This judgment is final, emphatically the last judgment, from which there can be no appeal; as it is called, Heb. vi. 2, "eternal judgment." It is universal in its extent, not only with respect to persons, but to the duration of its effects also; it extends to all the destinies of infinite duration, all powers and possibilities of body and soul. *These, the wicked, shall go away, &c.* (See on v. 22, x. 28, verse 41.)

*Everlasting . . . . eternal.* "Both words," says *Mr. Williams*, "are alike in the original,

and should have been rendered alike. 1. If the punishment of the wicked is to cease, no logic can prove that the life of the righteous is not also to cease. Common sense teaches that no other than the usual interpretation is possible. 2. As further evidence that the punishment is never to cease, consider that the sin against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, *neither in the world to come* (xii. 32); that the chaff is to be burnt up with *unquenchable* fire (iii. 12); that Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of *eternal* fire (Jude 7); that the beast and the false prophet (Rev. xx. 10) are to be tormented day and night *forever*. 3. If the word here rendered *everlasting* does not here mean *continuing without end*, the Greek language, with all its wonderful powers, had no word by which it was possible to express the idea. 4. If the Greek language had none, the English has none; *forever* being as incapable of expressing the idea of endless duration as the Greek word. It is admitted that the Greek word is sometimes applied with latitude to hills, &c., "everlasting

hills;" but this no more disproves that the real meaning of the word is endless duration, than the occasional use of the English word *forever* in a limited sense proves that that does not denote endless duration."

Everlasting punishment! This "terror of the Lord" was not intended to be defined and comprehended, but was to be left to those forebodings of imagination in which there can be no danger of excess—"Who knoweth the power of thine anger? according to thy fear so is thy wrath." *Life eternal!* Who can describe its blessedness? It passes the power of man to conceive. It can only be measured by contrast and comparison. An eternal rest after warfare and conflict, the eternal company of saints after buffeting with an evil world, an eternally glorious and painless body after struggles with weakness and infirmity, an eternal sight of Jesus face to face after only hearing and believing; all this is blessedness indeed. And yet the half of it remains untold. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

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1. What is said of the two parables in this chapter? 2. Whom do the wise virgins represent? 3. Whom the foolish? 4. What is meant by the oil? 5. What by the lamps? 6. Explain "they all slumbered and slept." 7. What did the foolish virgins do when they found their lamps had gone out? 8. What when the door was shut? 9. Who was this "man traveling into a far country?" 10. What are we to understand by the talents? 11. How did the servants respectively act? 12. How were they treated? 13. What is said of the coming of Christ? 14. What division will He make? 15. What will He say to them on the right hand? 16. What to them on the left hand? 17. What is said of "everlasting punishment?" 18. What of "life eternal?"

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

1 *The rulers conspire against Christ, 6 The woman anointeth his head, 14 Judas setteth him, 17 Christ eateth the passover: 26 instituteth his holy supper: 26 prayeth in the garden; 47 and being betrayed with a kiss, 57 is carried to Caiaphas, 69 and denied of Peter.*

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, 2. \*Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

\*Mark xiv. 1; Luke xxii. 1; John xiii. 1.

*Sayings*—those recorded in xxi.—xxv. Ye know, for He had forewarned them. (xx. 17, 19.) *After two days.* Our Lord's predictions concerning His approaching

passion and death increase in clearness as the event approaches. *Feast.* This word, in modern use, does not answer to the idea of the Passover. It was a religious celebration extending through a whole week. It was commemorative of the Hebrews' departure from the land of Egypt, and the preservation of their first-born, on the night when the first-born of Egypt were slain. This festival, associated in the type, was to be associated in the fact, with a greater deliverance of God's people by the

blood of Christ. Accordingly it was so ordered, that precisely at the Passover season, "Christ our Passover should be sacrificed for us." *Betrayed*. . . . *Crucified*. The first and the last steps of His final sufferings are here brought together.

3. ¶ Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4. And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. 5. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

<sup>b</sup>Ps. ii. 2; John xi. 47; Acts iv. 25, &c.

*Chief priests, scribes, elders, &c.* These constituted the Sanhedrim, the supreme legislature, especially in ecclesiastical matters, of the Jewish nation. *Caiaphas* was the actual high-priest at the time of our Lord's crucifixion, although *Annas* is also thus called (Acts iv. 6), because of his having formerly borne the office, and his near relationship to *Caiaphas*. *Consulted*. (Ps. ii. 2.) This was a secret consultation, and hence they did not assemble, according to the usual custom, at the temple. *Might take*—a forcible seizure. *By subtilty*, more correctly, "without the knowledge of the populace." *Kill him*—they are engrossed with designs of death against Jesus, while He is cherishing a purpose of salvation for the Jews and for all mankind. *Not on the feast day, &c.* They concluded to delay the matter until the people, who were there in great numbers for the Passover, and who might heed some kind of tumult, should be gone after the end of the feast. But when the traitor offered, they broke their purpose of delay. (Thus the Divine counsel was fulfilled. See Mark xii. 37; Luke xix. 48; Acts xviii. 10.)

6. ¶ Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 7. There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

<sup>c</sup>Mark xiv. 3; John xi. 1, 2, &c., xii. 3. <sup>d</sup>Chap. xxi. 17.

Of *Simon* we know nothing beyond the fact that he had been a leper, and probably one whom Jesus had cleansed, and a near neighbor of *Lazarus* and his sisters—our Lord's most intimate friends. The *woman* referred to was *Mary*. (John xii. 3.) *Poured it on his head*. The anointing of the head and feet with oil, was the highest honor. She took advantage of this occasion to signalize her devotion to her Lord, and her reverence for His person. The *Oriental alabaster*, which is so much valued on account of its translucency, and for its

variety of colored streakings, red, yellow, gray, &c., . . . is a fibrous carbonate of lime. This has been long used for various ornamental purposes, such as the fabrication of vases, boxes, etc. *Ointment*—pure *nard*, a celebrated perfume which was a compound of all the most valued perfumes of antiquity. *Very precious*—the "three hundred pence" for which it might have been sold (Mark xiv. 5), were worth about \$45, thrice the price for which *Judas* sold his Lord.

8. ¶ But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? 9. For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.—John xii. 4.

*Saw it*. It is more than probable that the attention of the company was first attracted to *Mary's* act of devotedness and love, by the delicious perfume of the ointment. (John xii. 3.) *They had indignation*. They turned away from the *moral quality* to the *expediency* of the question. Here is an example of objections, based on the utilitarian principle, to outlays on the outward form of public worship, that worthily express the feelings of reverence and love. We are here also warned against those cold judgments on the pious acts of devout hearts, against those frequent criticisms on spontaneous acts of feeling, against that bigotry which has for the conduct of others no other standard than that of one's own sentiments, and against that officiousness that would lay down rules according to which alone good works are to be performed. *To what purpose, &c.* This question seems to have been proposed by *Judas*, who was treasurer of the party, and who made wrongful appropriations of this common fund to his own private uses. Where love to God is strong, the offering to Him will be so large, as in the eye of the world to look like profusion and extravagance. They who clamor most about the demands of the poor, often least express their sympathy by practical goodness and liberality. Our sacrifices for Christ may be called "waste," waste of time, money, strength. Let none of these things move us. (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

10. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. 11. For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. 12. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. 13. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

<sup>1</sup>Deut. xv. 11; John xii. 8. <sup>2</sup>See chap. xviii. 20 and xxviii. 20; John xiii. 33, xiv. 19, xvi. 5, 23 and xvii. 11.

Our Lord saw at once the piety of the woman's heart, accepted her offering, and defended her against the illiberal cavils which it called forth. *Why trouble ye, &c.* What mildness and gentleness was this toward a wretch who was a vile hypocrite! Jesus makes no discovery of the avarice of Judas; whereas men seldom spare their brethren the shame of their vices, when it is all for their interest to discover them. *A good work.* It was good in itself, and so was acceptable to Christ; it was eminently reasonable, and so more acceptable still; it was "what she could" (Mark xiv. 8), and so most acceptable of all. It was the last token of honor Christ received before His death. *Ye have the poor always with you,* referring to Deut. xv. 11, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, *but me ye have not always*—a gentle hint of His approaching departure. This was also intended to impress the unexampled significance of the occasion. *In that she hath poured, &c.* Our Lord may have communicated a clearer knowledge of His approaching death to Mary than to His disciples; or, to her, as to a Divine love, may have been imparted the spiritual presentiment of the truth; or, she may have acted from the simple impulse of love, and Jesus gave the act a higher meaning. *This gospel shall be preached.* Jesus thus predicted the everlasting spread and universal triumph of His Gospel. What calmness, composure and certainty of ultimate triumph! *Be told, &c.* This prophecy is receiving a fulfillment every day. The deeds of many a king, and emperor, and general, are completely forgotten. But the grateful act of one humble Christian woman is recorded in one hundred and fifty different languages, and is known all over the globe. The pathway of lasting honor, is to honor Christ. (Ps. cxiii. 3, 6; Eccl. vii. 1.)

14. <sup>1</sup>Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, 15. And said unto them, <sup>2</sup>What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. 16. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

<sup>3</sup>Mark xiv. 10; Luke xxii. 3; John xiii. 2, 30. <sup>4</sup>Chap. x. 4. <sup>5</sup>Zech. xi. 12; chap. xxvii. 3.

*One of the twelve*—which is so high an aggravation of his sin, that it is mentioned with emphasis by all the Evangelists.

*Iscariot* is the Greek form of Isch Kerieth, a man of Kerieth, which was a small town of Judea, mentioned in Josh. xv. 25. *Went unto the chief priests*—to the house of Caiaphas, whom he knew to be a most bitter enemy of Jesus. *What will ye give me, &c.* This is a true bargainer's question. This reveals the sin which was his ruin. He is ready to betray his Master if he can get the *pay* for it. He has a man, a Divine man to sell, and he hucksters for his price. (1 Ti. vi. 9, 10; 2 Peter ii. 14, 15.) *Deliver him unto you, i. e.,* notify you where He passes the night, so that you may easily apprehend Him. *They covenanted, &c.* They bargained and agreed at once. *For thirty pieces of silver, or shekels, i. e.,* to pay this sum to him when Jesus had been actually delivered. This was the ordinary price of a slave (Ex. xxi. 32), being about fifteen dollars. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah (xi. 12), uttered five hundred years before. If the sum which the traitor received seems trifling, why may we not assume that it 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. It is an evil that works very deceitfully. It carries us captive before we are aware of our chains. *Sought opportunity, &c.*—kept on the watch for a convenient occasion to put Jesus into their hands in as private a manner as possible. *To betray him.* Being disappointed in the prey he hoped to have from the sale of the precious ointment (verse 9), he sold his Master to help to make up the sum.

17. <sup>1</sup>Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?—Ex. xii. 6; Mark xiv. 12; Luke xxii. 7.

*The first day, &c.* They called the day on which the Passover, or paschal lamb was killed, the first of the days of unleavened bread, because it was preparatory to that feast, and on that day the Jews began to eat unleavened bread (Ex. 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. *Where wilt thou, &c.*



This question was doubtless proposed as the day began to draw to a close. They meant at what house. *To eat the passover*, i. e., to celebrate the paschal feast. (See on verse 2.) This great festival our Saviour observed with His disciples the evening before He suffered, and with them ate the paschal lamb, which was a prophetic type of Himself. (Rev. xiii. 8.)

18. And he said, Go into the city, to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand: I will keep the passover at thy house, with my disciples.  
19. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

*Into the city*—the city of Jerusalem, for a paschal lamb could be eaten at no other place. The word *Master* is correlative to the word *disciple*, and thus it is clearly implied that the householder is a *follower* of Jesus. *My time is at hand*. My time of suffering, previous to which I have promised to eat the paschal lamb at your house. The name of the blessed individual who had the honor to receive Christ into his house on this, the greatest of all occasions, is not mentioned on earth, but we may well suppose that it is known and honored in heaven. *Made ready the passover*. (See on verse 17.) Peter and John prepare a passover for the Son of God and His disciples, but He Himself is preparing another which they know not of, for themselves and for the whole Church. How blessed are we if we have committed ourselves,

and all we possess, into the Saviour's hands! Then we need feel no anxiety about the future, for the Lord will provide. At the very *moment* we want a friend, He will raise one up. There is no request too *small* for Him to regard, nor too great for Him to grant.

20. ¶ Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.  
Mark xiv. 17-21; Luke xxii. 14; John xiii. 21.

Between three o'clock and nine was the time for killing the lamb, called, also, "between the evenings," in the Hebrew. (Ex. xii. 6.) *He sat down*—reclined on a couch. All the Apostles were present, Judas not excepted.

21. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me.

*Verily*. This preface indicated a statement accompanied by circumstances of peculiar pain, or at least emphasis. It is here evident that Jesus contemplated His death as certain. It was kind in Jesus to start a subject so painful to Himself, that Judas might yet reconsider his purpose, and abandon it. A state of conviction, however painful, is better than a state of delusion, however peaceful.

According to *Newcome's* Harmony, the following order shows the successive stages of the exposure of Judas by Jesus, after which, as is generally supposed, the traitor departed:

HARMONY.	MATT. XXVI.	MARK XIV.	LUKE XXII.	JOHN XIII.
1. Jesus indicates it shall be one of them	21	18	21	21
2. Answering their inquiries, He indicates that it is one near them, dipping into the same dish.	22-24	19-21	22-24	22
3. To John, in a low voice, He declares that the betrayer is the one to whom he shall give the <i>sop</i> , and gives it to Judas.				23-27
4. Satan enters into Judas, and Jesus bids him do quickly. None but John yet knows the exact one.				28-29
5. Judas at last asks, <i>Is it I?</i> and Jesus, before them all, declares that <i>it is he</i> .	25			

22. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord is it I?

It is not wonderful that the disciples should have been amazed and shocked at our Lord's announcement that He was to be exposed to shame, torture and death, and that the treason of a professed friend, and that professed friend one of themselves, was to be the means of bringing on their beloved Master's sufferings which they so deeply deprecated. *Began every one*, &c. See here what distrust of self! Each

disciple did not say, "Lord, is it John? Lord is it Peter?" &c., but, "Is it I?" Yet is not this the very last question we are apt to put? Are we not more ready and willing to detect and discuss the sins of a brother, than to analyze our own hearts, and trace out our own sentiments? But the way to make practical and personal improvement, is to look little at a brother, to look exclusively to ourselves.

23. And he answered, and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.  
Ps. xii. 9; Luke xxii. 21; John xiii. 18.

Our Lord here narrows the circle, and makes the exposure still more direct. As the Jews ate the passover a whole family together, it was not convenient for them all to dip their bread in the *same* dish, they therefore had several little dishes or plates, on different parts of the table, and those who were nigh one of these dipped their bread in it. Judas seems to have carried his effrontery and hypocrisy so far as to have taken his place near his Master. This aggravated the crime of the traitor. (See Ps. xli. 9.) *The same shall betray me.* Sad is the condition of any one who is secretly siding with Christ's enemies while he appears to be His friend. With what compassion Jesus regards such a miserable creature! He knows what remorse will one day tear him, what despair will take hold of him.

24. The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

<sup>o</sup>Ps. 22; Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 26; Mark ix. 12; Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 46; Acts xvii. 2, 3, and xxvi. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xv. 3.

*The Son of man.* 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. *As it is written.* Christ passed through His humiliation to His subsequent exaltation, in the character, for the purpose, with the dispositions, and in the circumstances in which it was determined that He should. *Woe unto that man, &c.* 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. Judas, who least of all understood the Divine purpose of redemption, is an eminent instrument in its accomplishment; a man, *by means* of whom something takes place which was to take place, and as it was to take place. *His purpose,* nevertheless, meant it very differently when he became the betrayer of Jesus, and this his *act,* as such, falls, therefore, as certainly under the Divine *imputa-*

*tion* as the *event* falls under the arrangements of Divine *providence.* There is no room here for finding an excuse for sin in predestination, based upon prescience. Ten thousand times does this interweaving of Divine foresight and the imputation of guilt, this combination of certainty and freedom, the one not affecting the other, occur in history; indeed, the providential government of the world is the perpetual exhibition of this deep mystery.

*It had been good, &c.* Let it be observed, that the Lord does not say, *It would have been better if that man had not been born,* for this would imply, better absolutely, and would border on that forbidden question, which invades the region of unexplained mystery, Why, then, did God permit him to be born? The Lord's word, "It had been good for that man," avoids all liability to such application. It had been good for him, *as he will feel and wish it eternally.* This includes a direct refutation of the annihilation of the damned. We are not to look upon this judgment of the Lord upon Judas—with all the majestic calmness of the eternal righteousness of God in which it is spoken, and in his humanity, according to the love of God incarnate in Him—as a cold and rigorous judgment of a condemned enemy, bereft of all sympathy and feeling. Rather is it the most affecting and melting lamentation of love which feels the woe as much as holiness requires or will admit.

25. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

*Master.* Judas is never said to have called Jesus *Lord.* *Is it I?* What those of single heart say for love, the darkened counterfeit by imitation. *Thou hast said—* a formula of answering affirmatively, first to those who affirm, thence also to those who inquire. It is equivalent to, *Thou knowest it—why dost thou ask?* (Comp. 1 Kings xx. 40.) "Meanwhile," says *Bishop Hall,* "how hath Judas deceived his companions! Had his former life been stamped with notorious wickedness, the disciples would have found an object on which to rest their just suspicions. Now, his past villainy has been so studiously concealed, that every one of the Apostles is as ready to suspect himself as him who

was really guilty. Well might the God of all knowledge exclaim, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked!' Judas can hear the denunciations of judgment against himself—he can hear his Master say, 'Wo be to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed—good were it for that man if he had never been born,' and yet he is no more appalled than very innocence. He has made a covenant with death, and with hell an agreement. And, as if the shameless offender would brave all accusation, and stifle all remorse, he too dares ask, 'Master, is it I?' No disci-

ple shall protest more loudly against this crime, than he who fosters it in his own bosom."

We now come to the institution of what is called the *Lord's Supper*. To every part of this most solemn and interesting ceremony the utmost attention should be paid. To aid in securing this result, we present in parallel columns, the text of the three Evangelists who have transmitted the whole account, together with that part of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians which speaks of the same subject, and which, he assures us, he received by Divine Revelation :

MATT. XXVI.	MARK XIV.	LUKE XXII.	1 COR. XI.
26. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body.	22. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat : this is my body.	19. And 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.	23. . . the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread.
27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it :	23. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them : and they all drank of it.	20. Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.	24. And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me.
28. For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.	24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.		25. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood ; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.	25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.		

The Passover was *once* celebrated by anticipation, before the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the Lord's Supper once before our ransom had been paid. The very fact that our Lord instituted His Supper on the same evening as the paschal supper, shows that it is a *continuance* in a modified form. It simply drops off the bloody elements, so that it is in fact true that our Sacramental ordinance has been continued from the departure of Israel to the present time, and will be continued until the full redemption and departure of the spiritual Israel, under the greater Moses to the full fruition of the heavenly Canaan.

26. <sup>a</sup>And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, <sup>b</sup>this is my body.  
<sup>a</sup>Mark xiv. 22 : Luke xxii. 19. <sup>c</sup>1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25. <sup>d</sup>1 Cor. x. 16.

As they were eating, &c. It was during the time of the Passover, and probably toward the end of the feast, that our Lord

instituted the Eucharist. He only is fit to institute a sacrament, who is able to give virtue and blessing to it. *Took bread*. As the natural bread satisfies the wants of the mortal body, and imparts strength to it, so the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is the bread which alone can impart life to, and satisfy the longings of, the immortal soul after salvation. This bread 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. *Blessed it*, or, as in Luke xxii. 19, He "gave thanks." He thanked God for all His covenant mercies, for His love, for His faithfulness, for what He had done, for what He had promised to do. *Brake it*. This symbolized the violence by which our Lord's body was put to death. Romanists, instead of breaking one bread among many,

give to each one an entire cake, transubstantiated, as they say, into the body, blood, soul and Divinity of Christ. *Gave it to the disciples*, those reclining around Him. Not only the *breaking*, but also the *distribution* of the bread are necessary parts of the rite. *Take, eat*. The expression, of eating, says an old divine, denotes four things: 1. The near mystical union between Christ and His saints. (John xvii. 23.) 2. The infinite delight the believing soul hath in Christ. 3. Spiritual nourishment. (John vi. 54.) 4. The wisdom of God, who restores us by the same means by which we fell. *This is my body*. This statement, *This is my body*, is made in accordance with the style of the sacred writers. Thus, it is said, "The three branches are three days," (Gen. xl. 12.) 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.) It has been remarked, that, in the Hebrew and the Syriac, a dialect of which was spoken by our Lord, there is no word which expresses to *denote*, *signify*, or *represent*, and that its place is supplied by the verb of existence. When we would say, this thing *signifies* another thing, the Jews said, this thing *is* another thing. For examples of this, beside those already given, see Gen. xli. 26, 27; Dan. vii. 24; Rev. i. 20. There is one passage in particular which exactly resembles the words under consideration, and is a sure guide in the consideration of them, as it expressly refers to that ordinance, in the room of which the Lord's Supper has succeeded. Moses said of the paschal lamb (Ex. xii. 11), "It is the Lord's passover," just as our Saviour said of the bread, "This is my body." The passover was the act of God, who *passed over* the houses of the Israelites, the lamb was only a memorial of it, and was so understood by every Israelite. Now, if we reflect that the Jews were accustomed, in this case, to call the sign by the name of the thing signified, we shall perceive that the disciples were in no danger of mistaking their Master's meaning, when He called the bread His body, that they must instantly have understood

His design, and known that nothing more was intended than to constitute the bread a sign or memorial of His body, especially as He added, "This do in remembrance of me."

This view of the case is strengthened by the circumstance that the disciples expressed no surprise, and stated no objection, as they would have done, if the doctrine of transubstantiation had occurred to them, and as the Jews did on another occasion, when they interpreted literally what our Lord had said about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. (John vi. 52.) Our Lord could not have meant that the bread was His real body, or the wine His real blood, because His body was present at the table, breaking the bread, His blood was still unshed, and He was speaking and acting in person among them. Surely if our Lord's body could sit at the table, and at the same time be eaten by the disciples, it was not a human body like our own. Observe, too, He broke the bread after it was blessed, when Papists think it was transubstantiated. The Apostle Paul, also, *after* the act which, according to the Church of Rome, transubstantiates the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Son of God, calls them still "this bread" and "this cup." (1 Cor. xi. 26.)

27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: 28. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins  
\*Mark xiv. 23. \*see Ex. xxiv. 8; Lev. xvii. 11. \*Jer. xxxi. 31. \*Chap. xx. 28; Rom. v. 15; Heb. ix. 22.

*The cup*, in which was contained the wine drank at the passover. (1 Cor. x. 16.) *Gave thanks*. The two words employed with reference to the action of our Lord after He had taken the bread and wine, one signifying to *bless*, the other to *give thanks*, seem to have virtually the same meaning. It is by praise and thanksgiving that we must prepare ourselves to receive the gifts of God, and to offer and present our duties unto Him. He gives us more than He receives, when He gives us the grace to offer as we ought. *Drink ye, &c.* As it was necessary, in order to confirming the covenant of God with His people, that this ordinance should be instituted by our Saviour, so something must be done by them to signify their consent to the cove-

nant, hence the command to "eat" and "drink" the bread and wine. How strange that the Romanists, in face of this passage, and notwithstanding the cup was received in the ancient Church for 1400 years, as is confessed by two popish councils, should prohibit the laity! The same argument which confines the wine to the clergy, when fairly applied, must limit the bread also to them. But in regard to neither of the elements is there any restriction; the whole body of believers are to receive both.

*This is my blood, &c., i. e.,* the new covenant, made in or by my blood, not by the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices. 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 old covenant was ratified by the blood of bulls, goats and calves, the new covenant was ratified and confirmed by the blood of Christ. (Heb. ix. 11-28.) *Which is shed, &c. Is shed.* Present tense. The sacrifice is already virtually accomplished. Our Lord in these words conveys the nature of His death. It was not the example of the faithfulness of a martyr, but a sacrifice, an oblation for the remission of sins. The principal blessing is expressed, which has been purchased by the blood of Christ. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation. The doctrine of atonement for sin by the shedding of blood was no new thing. It had been taught to the Jews by the whole appointed course of their sacrifices, which showed that "*without shedding of blood is no remission.*" (Heb. ix. 22.)

<sup>29.</sup> But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

<sup>a</sup>Mark xiv. 25; Luke xxii. 18. <sup>a</sup>Acts x. 41.

*I will not drink, &c.* 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 them 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. *I will not drink.* Of course He is not to drink His own blood. He is not to derive life and salvation from His own atonement. *Drink it new.* He will never drink it in its *sacrificial*, but in its *eucharistic* sense. Hence He does not say that He will drink the blood, but "this fruit of the vine." It is the *life part*, not the *death part* of the symbol of which He speaks. He will not drink the earthly wine even in its joyous character, but He will, in the glorious kingdom, drink that reality of which this life-symbol is the figure, namely, *life, the vita beata, the blessed life.* Let us take care to raise our hearts from the sacramental communion here on earth to the eternal communion in heaven, to be celebrated there, not under veils or sensible symbols, but openly and without veils.

<sup>30.</sup> <sup>b</sup>And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

<sup>b</sup>Mark xiv. 26.

It was usual with the Jews to sing a hymn after their repasts. The hymn that was sung on this occasion may have been one of what the Jews called *Paschal Psalms*, which began with the 113th and ended with the 118th. Or was it any one else of the compositions of David, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel?" We cannot determine. We have every reason to believe the subject of it was suited to the occasion, and never had language been so honored before. Observe, 1. That this hymn was *sung*. Singing, then, is a Christian ordinance. 2. That it was sung immediately after the administration of our Lord's own supper. Hence we learn that singing should accompany this sacred ordinance. "Joy becomes a feast," and this is a feast—a feast of love and friendship—a feast of reconciliation between God and us. 3. That this singing was immediately followed by Christ's entrance into Gethsemane. This garden was for Jesus a place of *suffering*. The prospect of suffering, then, should not prevent our

joy and praise. "Come," would *Luther* say to Melancthon, a wise man but more timorous than himself, when prospects looked dark and distressing at the beginning of the Reformation, "Come let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm; and let earth and hell do their worst."

31. Then saith Jesus unto them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."  
Mark xiv. 27; John xvi. 32. xxi. 6. Zech. xiii. 7. Chap. xxviii. 7, 10, 16; Mark xiv. 23 and xvi. 7.

By *all ye*, is to be understood the eleven, after Judas had left. Christ was betrayed by one, denied by one, forsaken by all His disciples. *Offended*—terrified by the dangers that awaited our Lord, and would desert and virtually renounce Him that very night. *It is written*. The quotation is from the prophecy in Zech. xiii. 7, in which God is said to thus address the sword of His justice: "Awake sword against my shepherd," &c., *i. e.*, the shepherd of my people. Here God's sword is commissioned to do what was really done by the hands of wicked men who were His instruments, yet in such a sense as to be voluntary agents, deserving of Peter's charge, that with *wicked hands* they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. The sword of God also pierced our Lord in those myterious agonies in the garden and on the cross, which far transcended His physical sufferings. The prophecy is a clear proof, both of the Divine nature of Christ and of the design of His death to satisfy the demands of Divine justice. *Risen again*. To console and support His disciples under this trial, the Saviour assures them that He would rise again from the dead, and after His resurrection He would meet them at a certain place He appointed in Galilee, the region to which most, if if not all, of them present belonged.

33. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34. Jesus said unto him, "Verily, I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."  
Mark xiv. 30; Luke xxii. 34; John xiii. 33.

The Apostles, as we may easily imagine, were greatly hurt at the admonitory prediction of our Lord (verse 31), and protested that they would never forsake Him. But Peter more particularly, who, from

the ardor of his disposition, was always more forward in his professions, and more indignant at the slightest reflection on his character than any of the rest, immediately cried out with warmth and eagerness, *Though all men, &c.* The meaning of Peter was: nothing—nothing can shake my resolution. This confidence was entirely characteristic of the man. He was ardent, sincere, and really attached to his Master. This declaration was made evidently, 1. From true love to Jesus. 2. From too much reliance on his own strength. 3. From ignorance of himself and of the trial he was soon to pass through. And it most impressively teaches us, 1. That no strength of attachment to Jesus can justify such confident promises of fidelity made without dependence on Him. 2. That all promises to adhere to Him should be made relying on Him for aid. 3. That we little know how feeble we are till we are tried. (2 Kings. viii. 13.) 'Tis an humble fear of falling that must enable us to stand. We should 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.

*Before the cock crow, &c.*, of the Evangelists are easily reconciled. With regard to the time of the event here predicted, our Lord intimated two things: 1. That all the denials should take place ere the period called the cock-crowing had passed—a period more fixed in Judea, where there is comparatively little difference in the length of the days than in our country, so much farther from the equator; and 2, That the cock which Peter should hear, should not crow twice, till he had a third time denied him.

*Though I should die, &c.* It became plain that nothing could cure Peter's mistaken estimate of his own strength, but experience of his weakness. It was a painful method of cure, but in his case it was an effectual one. Christians who share in Peter's self-confidence, will share in his signal fall and bitter tears. We cannot have too great a horror of denying Christ.

We cannot be too resolute never to deny Him. We cannot be too careful to keep out of the way of temptation to deny Him. But we cannot too earnestly take heed to Cowper's solemn utterance :

" Be ware of Peter's word,  
Nor confidently say—  
I never will deny my Lord,  
But grant I never may.

" Man's wisdom is to seek  
His strength in God alone:  
And e'en an angel would be weak,  
Who trusted in his own."

*Likewise also said all the disciples.* The other disciples—sad, sorrowful and perplexed—appear to have kept a respectful silence, till Peter's repeated declarations that he would never deny his Lord, coupled, as they were, with the insinuation contained in the words, "Though all should be offended," seemed to make it necessary, for the purpose of clearing themselves of coldness, or false-heartedness, or half-heartedness, in their Master's cause, that they should solemnly declare that they were as determined as Peter could be, never to deny their Lord.

36. ¶ Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

<sup>b</sup>Mark xiv. 32-35; Luke xxii. 39; John xviii. 1.

*Then.* Judas had already retired from the little company, and Jesus had been strengthening and consoling His disciples with instructions suited to their case. He had also foretold the fall of Peter. He then retired with His disciples to *Gethsemane*, a place, or a farm, just east of Jerusalem, and at the foot of the Mount of Olives. *Sit ye here, &c.* This direction seems to have been given as they entered the garden. *While I go, &c.* As Jesus had frequently left His disciples to enjoy prayer and communion with God by Himself, there was nothing unusual in His retirement, even at this late hour for prayer.

37. And he took with him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.  
38. Then saith he unto them, <sup>k</sup>My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.—<sup>l</sup>Chap. iv. 21. <sup>m</sup>John xii. 27.

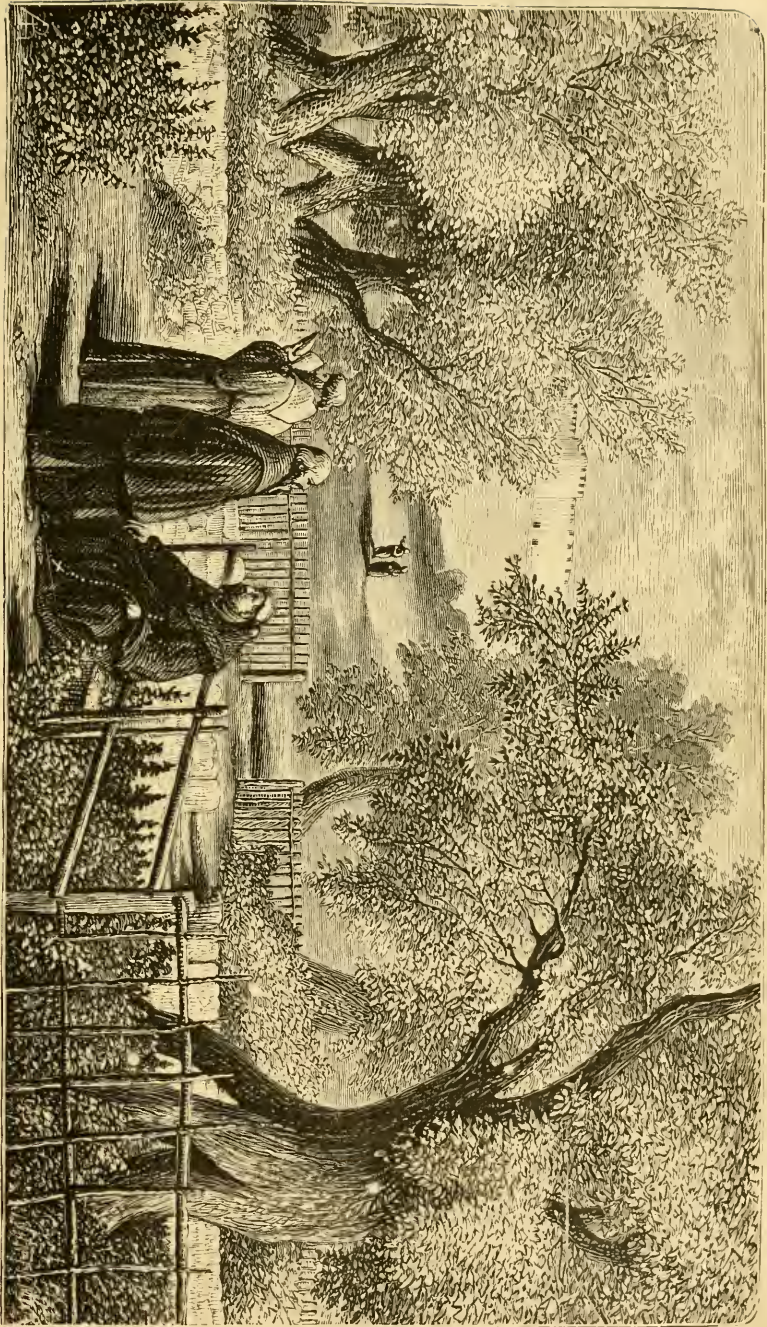
*Sons of Zebedee.* James and John. (See Matt. x. 2; Mark xiv. 33.) *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.* The import of this complaint is not confined to the idea expressed by, "I am grieved to death," or "sorrow threatens my life," although the words certainly assert this in the first place. Even according to this explanation

of them, they convey an idea of the sorrows of the Redeemer's soul, which is the more appalling the less exaggeration we can suppose in the words of Him who was Himself the Truth. The being "sorrowful unto death," however, does not indicate merely the measure, but also the nature and kind of suffering. We read in the sequel that "he was in an agony," or, as other translators have it, "he wrestled with death." It was in the horrors of this state that our Surety felt Himself placed, not merely in the way of beholding them, but also in that of a mysterious entering into them. Whatever men may say, without holding firmly by the idea of a Mediator, the horrors of Gethsemane can never be satisfactorily explained. A mere representation of the death of the sinner, from which Christ came to redeem mankind, could not have laid hold of the Holy One of Israel so overpoweringly. He entered into much closer contact with "the last enemy." He emptied the cup of its terrors. *Tarry ye here, &c.* He means, "Do not leave me, your presence is a comfort." It is not they, but Himself, who is to be pitied. "Tarry ye here." In what terrific vicinity must He have found Himself, that even the sight of these poor, frail disciples, seemed so desirable and beneficial to Him.

39. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, <sup>n</sup>O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, <sup>o</sup>not as I will, but as thou wilt.

<sup>p</sup>Mark xiv. 33; Luke xxii. 42; Heb. v. 7. <sup>q</sup>John xii. 27. <sup>r</sup>Chap. xx. 22. <sup>s</sup>John v. 30 and vi. 38; Phil. ii. 8.

So that there were three divisions of the little band: there were the eight disciples, the three chosen ones, and, at a little distance, the suffering Saviour. *Fell on his face.* He first kneeled down (Luke xxii. 41), but as His mental anguish increased, He prostrated Himself on the ground, and "with strong crying and tears, offered up His prayers and supplications." (Heb. v. 7.) The disciples were entreated to "watch" with our Lord, but not to pray with Him 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. *O my Father, &c.* It was thus implied that *in itself*, this cup, the extreme inward anguish of spirit which He was suffering, the fear with which He was oppressed,



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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, was so revolting that only its being the Father's will would induce Him to taste it, but that *in that view of it* He was perfectly prepared to drink it up. There was no struggle between a reluctant and a compliant will, but between two views of one event—an *abstract* and a *relative* view of it, in the one of which it was *revolting*, in the other *welcome*. By signifying how it felt in the *one* view, He shows His beautiful oneness with ourself in nature and feeling; by expressing how He regarded it in the *other* light, He reveals His absolute obediential subjection to His Father.

Note, 1. The suffering which is here recorded, shows the extent of Christ's love. Had He suffered less, we should not have rightly known the greatness of that mercy which He exercised toward mankind. It was much, indeed, that "when he was rich" in the fulness of heavenly joy, He should "become poor," for man's sake, and descend to a world like ours. But that He should place Himself under the fierceness of that Divine wrath, from which His disciples are delivered, is a degree of love which "passes all understanding." One return He requires of us, one return we can attempt to make—our gratitude: gratitude which is to be shown by obedience to His will. (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) 2. 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.

40. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, what, could ye not watch with me one hour?

*Findeth them asleep.* Dr. Rush, in his *Diseases of the Mind*, says, "There is another symptom of grief which is not often noticed,

and that is *profound sleep*. I have often witnessed it even in mothers, immediately after the death of a child. Criminals, we are told by Mr. Ackerman, the keeper of Newgate, in London, often sleep soundly the night before their execution. The son of General Custine slept nine hours the night before he was led to the guillotine in Paris."

*Watch with me one hour?* There seems to be rebuke in this question, but it is, we think, uttered more with the purpose of marking for us the fact that the pressure under which Jesus struggled was, even in its proximity, too much for them.

41. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.  
 Mark xiii. 33 and xiv. 38; Luke xxii. 40, 46; Eph. vi. 18.

*Watch and pray, &c.* At first they were directed to watch (verse 38), but now prayer is added as a duty. It is Christian watchfulness which is now enjoined upon them. They were wearied out in body and mind. This rendered them more liable to yield to the temptations, which were soon to beset them. 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. Prayers are a sure succor against the most perilous assaults of our enemies.

*That ye enter not, &c.* This precept of our Lord has a general and comprehensive application. We must beware of the beginning, for it is in fatal connection with the next ensuing, and yet conceals what is behind. And since temptation is sure to be early with its beginnings, so, too, should watching and praying, early in life, early in the day, early in every undertaking. "Enter not," that is, that we be cautious of venturing into anything which we have reason to believe or suspect may, from its influence on our passions, and the mingling of other things, soon become a temptation. *The spirit indeed is willing, &c.*, that is, your souls are, indeed, kindly disposed toward me, but your animal nature is feeble, is exhausted, shrinks from trouble, and seeks repose. Do not trust to your pious resolutions. Your easily ensnared nature needs

much stronger restraint, especially when baneful influences from without are super-added. Hence the need of special prayer at this trying time. The benevolent Saviour found also, in this remark, some apology for His well-disposed, yet feeble disciples. All true Christians find within two contrary principles and a continual strife between the two. (See Rom. vii. 21-23.)

42. He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

*He went away again the second time, &c.* Among other things, we may here learn, 1. That it is our duty to resign ourselves to the will of God. 2. That in times of sore conflict we should not continue in one uninterrupted strain of prayer, lest our devotion become feeble; we should rather pause and let the spirit, as it were, take breath, in order that our petition may be urged with all the more earnestness. 3. That it is not wrong, as some strangely suppose, to repeat prayer. Here we have prayer repeated. And wherever there is the deepest feeling, there will be the repetition of the same thing. The simplest words and the intensest thoughts oft repeated are generally the evidence of real feeling and of fervent prayer.

*O my Father, if this cup may not pass away, &c.* In this second prayer the spirit of perfect submission is prominent. Christ knew that the Father heard Him always (John xi. 42), for this reason He takes the continuance of His anguish as the answer to His last words—as thou wilt!—as the confirmation of the Divine will, that He should drink the cup.

43. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

*For their eyes were heavy.* Sorrow 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. (See on verse 40.) The same three who slept at the transfiguration were the three who slept in Gethsemane. Jesus probably administered to them some gentle reproof, for Mark says that “they wist not what to answer Him.” 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 entrusted to our care.

44. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. See on verses 39, 42.

Let us not be tired with studying this pattern of perseverance, humility, and simplicity in prayer. Let us comfort ourselves with Christ, when God makes us sensible of our barrenness and poverty in prayer. If He reduces us to one single good thought, to one comfortable word, to one pious motion, it is reasonable that we should be contented therewith, and humbly make use of it.

45. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest, behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

Finding His disciples again sunk in sleep, He says, *Sleep on now and take your rest.* But why should He bid them sleep now when the tramp of the soldier is almost in their hearing? Of all the renderings of this verse to meet this query, probably the best is that which by merely changing the punctuation, which is of no authority, makes it a question. Sleep ye on now, and take your rest? Is it a time for slumber when the betrayer is on the approach? There is another meaning admissible. The whole matter is now decided, and you may sleep on, as watching is needless.

*The hour is at hand*—the time of my calamity, time which demands your utmost vigilance. What an hour was that! The leader of the embattled host anticipates the coming conflict, amidst the stern struggle of opposing armies on the field of blood, with an awe and an agitation deep and overwhelming, which makes him count with harassing anxiety, every passing moment, till that awfully important hour arrives when he shall be either crowned as a victor, or loaded with the disgrace of a defeat. Often has the fate of kingdoms and empires been left to the decision of an hour, and that hour of inconceivable importance to millions. Often have the rights and the liberties, the freedom or the slavery of a nation, depended upon the result of a contest where valor, and patriotism, and magnanimity, struggled hard amidst the

clash of arms and the din of war, and their bosoms have beat with trembling anxiety, as from lip to lip the important announcement passed, "Behold, the hour is at hand." But, although we could put together all the interesting anticipations, all the distressing and conflicting hopes and fears, all the important deeds and destinies that were ever suspended upon any hour in the world's history, they would instantly sink into insignificance, compared with the vast and eternal interests of innumerable myriads which were suspended upon the results of that hour which our Saviour here declares to be at hand.

*The Son of man is betrayed, &c.* Here there is a striking antithesis between the words "Son of man," an epithet by which our Lord so frequently refers to Himself as the Messiah, and "sinners." Although special reference is had to the chief priests, who dispatched the band, with Judas as guide, to apprehend Him, yet the general term "sinners," as opposed to the "Son of man," who "came to save that which was lost" (xviii. 11, Luke, xix. 10), seems designed to include the human race, all of whom virtually shared in the dreadful sin of crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Rise, let us be going, &c.* Not to attempt an escape, but rather let us meet them, giving thereby proof that I know their designs, and might have by flight, or otherwise, provided for my own safety, but I go willingly to meet that death which their malice designs for me, and through death provide for the life of the world. *Behold, he is at hand, &c.*—he of whom I have spoken. *Me,* He says, not *you.* The betrayal of their Lord by one of their own number was an additional reason for wakefulness—the case of Judas was in fulfillment of their Lord's predictions, (Mark xiv. 20), and was full of warning to them all. (Matt. xxvi. 31). Happy he who, through zeal for God's justice, or through charity toward his neighbor, goes forth to meet the cross, and even death itself! but so as not to do anything contrary either to the command of God, or to other duties which regard our neighbor, or to what prudence and humility require of us as to ourselves.

47. ¶ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

¶ Mark xiv. 43: Luke xxii. 47: John xviii. 3: Acts i. 16.

*One of the twelve.* With this name, as with a branding-iron, Judas is designated even unto the end. The higher the station is from whence we fall, the less hope is there of any recovery. *With swords, &c.* They came in force, probably apprehensive of resistance from the disciples, or of some other attempt of rescue by the way. This *multitude* consisted 1. of "the band" of Roman soldiers (John xviii. 3); 2. "The captains of the temple;" 3. Several of the Jewish dignitaries (Luke xxii. 52); 4. Servants of these dignitaries (John xviii. 18.) Our Lord was thus arrested by the Jewish authority, partly using Roman instrumentality.

48. Now he that betrayed him, gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he, hold him fast.

Judas decided to perpetrate his wicked deed under cover of night. This was sagacious for the sake of his enterprise, for had it been undertaken by day, how many swords, like that of Peter, would have leaped from their scabbards in Christ's defense? The Saviour had servants who would not have hesitated a moment to risk their lives in His behalf. It would have been a great advantage to the traitor, to be able, as he hoped, to accomplish his object while Jesus was asleep. But this contrivance miscarries. In the house through which the way to the garden runs, Judas is informed that the eye of the dreaded was awake—that Jesus was with the disciples in the garden. How will he now secure his prey? Cunning must invent some new plan. He gives the armed troop to understand that he will indicate by the symbol of friendship whom they are to arrest, and urges them not to let him go, whatever may be his protestations or attempts to escape. The Church of Christ is but too often betrayed with a kiss of peace, by false appearances of virtue, by calumnies spread abroad in soft language, and under deceitful pretence of peace, and of the interest of the Church.

49. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master, and kissed him.—2 Sam. xx. 9.

*Kissed him.* This simple fact revealed

the affectionate terms on which the disciples associated with our Lord. It is an universal custom in Eastern countries, when friend meets friend, to salute one another with a kiss. (Ex. xviii. 7; 1 Sam. xx. 41.) *Forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, &c.* Judas, along with the multitude, had reeled back and fallen to the ground. Along with them he speedily regained his standing posture, and was a listener, as the Lord said, "I have told you that I am he," inviting them to do with Him as they wished. There is a pause, a hesitation, for who will be the first to lay hand upon Him? Judas will relieve any lingering fear. He will show them how safe it is to approach this Jesus. Though the stepping forth of Christ, and the questions and answers which followed, have done away with all need of the preconcerted signal, he will yet go through all that he had engaged to do, or, perhaps, it is almost a mechanical impulse upon which he acts, for he had fixed on the thing that he was to do toward accomplishing the arrest, he had coned his part well beforehand, and braced himself up to go through with it. Hence, when the time for action comes, he stops not to reflect, but lets the momentum of his predetermined purpose carry him along. He salutes Jesus with a *kiss*. If ever a righteous indignation might legitimately be felt, surely it was here. And if that burning sense of wrong had gone no further in its expression than simply the refusal of such a salutation, would not Christ have acted with unimpeachable propriety? But it is far above this level that Jesus will now rise. He will give an example of gentleness, of forbearance, of long-suffering kindness without a parallel.

50. And Jesus said unto him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.—Ps. xli. 9 and iv. 13.

*Friend, &c.* The dreadful inquisitorial interrogatory rolls like terrific thunder through the traitor's heart. Must the Son of man be betrayed by one of His own disciples, as if He had been a hard Master? Must the badge of friendship be the instrument of treachery? The word "*friend*," or, as it might be more correctly rendered, "companion," recalled to his mind the privileged position with which, as having been received into the circle of the Lord's

most intimate associates, he had been favored. This address reminds him also of the many manifestations of unspeakable kindness with which he had been loaded for three whole years, in the immediate society and faithful superintendence of the most amiable among men. And if one unobdurate place had been left in his heart, how would this remembrance have affected and overpowered him! 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.

*Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.* As soon as the Divine influence, by which the multitude were withheld, was, in a measure, withdrawn, they used their power to apprehend Him. Our Lord made no resistance. "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter." There was no occasion for violence. Yet from the fact that His apprehension was effected by His most bitter enemies, and one of His disciples was aroused to resistance in His behalf, we may well suppose that He was treated in a very rough and unbecoming manner.

51. And behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear.  
John xviii. 10.

*One of them, &c.* We might have conjectured that it was Peter who committed this rash deed, but we are not left to uncertainty on this point. John informs us (xviii. 10) that it was Peter. Perhaps, as the other Evangelists wrote their Gospels during the lifetime of the Apostles, 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. *Stretched out his hand, &c.* We can understand what was passing in Peter's heart. The words our Lord had uttered

on the road to Gethsemane, respecting his denying his Master, and his own reply, still fermented within him, and he was anxious to show the latter that, in accordance with his own assertion, he would rather die than forsake Him. Full of these ideas, and, doubtless, with a confused remembrance of what the Lord had said respecting the purchase of swords, he blindly attacks the troop with his blade of steel, and smites Malchus (John xviii. 10), one of the high priest's servants, on the right ear, so that it hangs down on his cheek, only by a slender shred. The servant's name was the Greek and Latin form of *Malch*, signifying *king*. A Christian is not a soldier of the world, to defend himself after a worldly manner, but a soldier of Christ, who is to defend himself like his Master, only by suffering with patience, and rendering good for evil. Here, for the first and only time, a human creature suffers that Jesus may be protected. It is much easier to fight a little for Christ, than to endure hardness for Him.

52. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: "for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword."—Gen. ix. 6; Rev. xiii. 10.

*Put up again thy sword, &c.* The sword has its *place*, but its *place* is not the hands of the Apostles. Our Lord does not command the sword to be flung away. As a recognized instrument of governmental authority, the stern asserter of law and peace, it has its place. (Rom. xiii. 4.) John adds (xviii 11), "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This expresses *both the feelings* which struggled in the Lord's heart during the agony in the garden—*aversion to the cup viewed in itself*, but, *in the light of the Father's will, perfect preparedness to drink it up*. (See on verses 39, 42.)

*For all they that take the sword, &c.* Those who take the sword must run all risks of human warfare, but mine is a warfare whose weapons, as they are not carnal, are attended with no such hazards, but carry certain victory. Christianity is not to be enforced by bloodshed, and belief in it extorted by force. Happy would it have been for the Church if this sentence had been more frequently remembered. What has been the effect of attempting to change men's religious opinions by compulsion,

penalties, imprisonment and death? The pages of history supply an answer. No wars have been so bloody as those which have arisen out of the collision of religious opinion. Never should it be forgotten that the weapons of the Christian warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. (2 Cor. x. 4.)

53. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?  
\*2 Kings vi. 17; Dan. vii. 10.

*Thinkest thou that I cannot now—even after things have proceeded so far—pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me, rather, peace at my disposal, more than twelve legions of angels*, with allusion, possibly, to the one angel who had, in His agony, appeared to Him from heaven strengthening Him (Luke xxii. 43; see on chap. xxvi. 44), and in the precise number alluding to the *twelve* who needed the help, Himself and His eleven disciples. The Roman legion consisted of about 6,000 men, which would make the whole number here referred to 72,000 angels. This, however, is put for an indefinitely great number. *Doddrige* remarks: "How dreadfully irresistible would such an army of angels have been, when one of these celestial spirits was able to destroy 185,000 Assyrians at one stroke!"

54. But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?  
\*Isa. liii. 7, &c.; verse 24; Luke xxiv. 25, 44, 46.

*The Scriptures.* (Isa. liii.) It was in accordance with the Scriptures that Jesus should be taken by violent hands and be put to death. Hence it would be unsuitable for Him to seek any special means of rescue from the multitude, as the time had now come for Him to be delivered up. (See on Luke xxiv. 25, 44, 46.)

55. In the same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

*The multitudes.* (See on verse 47.) *Thief*, rather a robber. *Staves*, literally, *wood, &c.*, 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.

*I sat daily with you, &c.*—for many days before the Passover. *Ye laid no hold on 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.

56. But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him and fled.  
\*Lam. iv. 20; verse 54. \*See John xviii. 15.

*All this was done*—rather, “All this has been done.” That these are the words of Christ, and not of Matthew, is clear from comparing Mark xiv. 49. (See on verse 54). By *Scriptures of the prophets* is meant the prophetic writings, which speak of the sufferings and death of the Messiah, such as the Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, &c.

*Then all the disciples, &c.* This shows us their weakness and depravity. They fled from fear, but their fear was needless. Jesus had stipulated for their safety. (John xviii. 8). They were under great obligations to Him. He had done much for them in calling them by His grace, and dignifying them with the Apostleship. He was now going to bleed and die for them. And they had professed a great attachment to Him. Yet they all forsook Him, and fled! Yet this culpable cowardice was overruled for good. For their very declension made their witness, after His

resurrection, the more unexceptionably credible, and the weakness of their faith has proved the strengthening of ours.

57. † And they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.  
‡Mark xiv. 53; Luke xxii. 54, John xviii. 12, 13, 24.

*Led him away, &c.* John says, to “Annas,” who was father-in-law of Caiaphas. This was done probably as a mark of respect, he having been high priest, and, perhaps, distinguished for prudence, and capable of advising his son-in-law in a difficult case. Here Jesus was subjected to the informal preliminary examination recorded in John xviii. 19–24.

58. But Peter followed him afar off, unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

*Peter followed him afar off.* This was better than forsaking Him and fleeing, as the rest did. Here was the working of some degree of principle. Here was some love to the Saviour, or he would not have followed Him at all. But he was overcome by fear. “The fear of man bringeth a snare.” “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.” Yet this was very unbelieving in Peter. He had seen his Lord's miracles, and knew what He could do. It was also very ungrateful. The Saviour had done much for him, and was now going to suffer and die for him. And a friend is born for adversity. Then, instead of keeping at a distance from us, we look for his attendance and sympathy. All this, too, was in violation of Peter's own profession and vows, that he was willing to follow his Lord to prison and to death. Many, alas, in this, imitate Peter. They are afraid to follow the Saviour closely. They fear danger, ridicule or persecution.

*Palace.* The word, thus rendered, properly signifies 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. From verse 69, as well as from what we are told in other Gospels, it is evident that Peter was only in the court without; nor was it at all extraordinary that there should be a fire in such a place. (See Mark xiv. 54; Luke xxii. 55.) 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.

*Sat with the servants*—the servants of the high priest, and the servants of those wicked men who were then sitting in judgment upon Jesus. As these servants unquestionably shared with their masters in the utmost hostility to the Messiah, and in rejoicing that He was now their captive, of course they were not proper companions for Peter. While they were warning themselves in the open court, he, 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. From his present conduct, we cannot wonder at the sequel. His subsequent course in denying Jesus, and thrice, and swearing with oaths and curses, was only the continuance and the increase of his following Him afar off, and his sitting down with His enemies. The way of error and sin is always down hill, and once in motion, who can tell where a man will stop?

*To see the end.* His intention appears to have been to ascertain what accusations were brought against Jesus, what defense He would make, and what was the disposition of the judges. And as all the Apostles clung to the belief that their Master would occupy the throne of David—the earthly throne in Jerusalem—so Peter might suppose that now when He was driven to extremity, He would at once avow Himself the King of the Jews, and by the demonstration of some tremendous act of authority, would scatter his accusers and his judges, and stand forth in the midst of them, as the long-promised and undoubted Deliverer of Israel.

59. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death: 60. But found none: Yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61. And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Ps. xxvii. 12 and xxv. 11; Mark xiv. 55; Acts vi. 13. Deut. xix. 15. Chap. xxvii. 40; John ii. 19.

*All the council.* By this we have to understand all those members that were the enemies of Jesus. Those few that were His friends—Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea—had, no doubt, for some time ceased to assemble with them. (See John vii. 50, &c., ix. 22; Luke xxiii. 51.)

*Sought false witness, &c.* There is everywhere testimony for Him without seeking, but against Him they found none. Though the council had predetermined on the death of Jesus, they, out of regard to their character, and the customs of the court, which could not easily be dispensed with, felt the necessity of observing some show of legal procedure. The fundamental rule of evidence was, that no man could be capitally convicted but on the evidence of two independent witnesses for every essential fact. Now, although there were plenty of witnesses willing to testify to anything, no two could be found whose testimony could be made to tally in the degree the law required.

62. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?—Mark xiv. 60.

Aggravated at this imperturbable silence of Jesus, and seeing that there was no evidence on which a conviction could be founded, unless it might be drawn from Himself, the high priest called his attention to the evidence, and asked why He did not answer to it.

63. But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Isa. liii. 7; chap. xxvii. 12, 14. Lev. v. 1; 1 Sam. xiv. 24, 26.

*Jesus held his peace.* How eloquent was this silence—more overwhelming for the children of the father of lies than the severest reproofs would have been. And why make many words on this occasion, since His enemies, though against their will, witnessed so powerfully in His favor that He needed no further justification. The essential meaning of His silence, however, lies still deeper. It is the reflection of a more mysterious silence before another and higher than any human tribunal, and regarded from this point of view, it may be considered as a silence of confession and assent. He is silent, not only as a lamb, but also as the Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world. (See on verse 57.) *I adjure thee, &c.* At our Lord's silence Caiaphas became desperate, and adopted a resource which our 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. This was the usual form of adjuration among the Jews, and the answer returned to it had the validity of an oath. *Whether thou be, &c.* Dost thou claim, at the same time that thou pretendest to be the Messiah of the country, to be the Son of God?

64. Jesus saith unto him, *Thou hast said*: nevertheless, I say unto you, <sup>1</sup>Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

<sup>1</sup>Dan. vii. 13; chap. xvi. 27 and xxiv. 30; Luke xxi. 27 and xxv. 31; John i. 51; Rom. xiv. 10; 1 Thes. iv. 16; Rev. i. 7. <sup>2</sup>Ps. cx. 1; Acts vii. 55.

*Thou hast said*—a Hebrew form of expression, that intimates a strong affirmation. “Ye say rightly that I am.” (See Mark xiv. 62), where the answer is, “I am.” This shows that Caiaphas used the words “Christ” and “Son of God” in their Scriptural sense. Seldom, in the course of His ministry, did our Lord announce Himself as the Messiah. But now, in the great and trying moment, and when solemnly questioned by the Jewish nation, in the person of their high priest, He returns the solemn reply, “I am.”

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.

The open confession thus made teaches us a lesson in our profession of Christ. Did He acknowledge and proclaim His character, thus furnishing us a sure ground of trust in His merits and mediation, and shall we shrink from an open and decided confession of the Master we profess to serve? *The Son of man sitting, &c.* “I know the scorn with which you are ready to meet such an avowal. To your eyes, which are but eyes of flesh, there stands at this bar only a mortal like yourselves, and he at the mercy of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities; nevertheless, a day is coming when ye shall see another sight; those eyes, which now gaze on me with proud

disdain, shall see this very prisoner at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then shall the Judged One be revealed as the Judge, and His judges in this chamber appear at His august tribunal; then shall the *unrighteous* judges be *impartially* judged, and while they are wishing that they had never been born, He for whom they now watch as their victim shall be greeted with the hallelujahs of heaven, and the welcome of Him that sitteth upon the Throne.”

65. <sup>1</sup>Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66. What think ye? They answered and said, <sup>2</sup>He is guilty of death.

<sup>2</sup>Kings xviii. 37, and xix. 1. <sup>3</sup>Lev. xxiv. 16; John xix. 7.

One would have thought that the dignified composure with which our Lord bore the insults He met with, that the solemn silence He maintained when His enemies testified against Him—but, above all, that the explicit testimony He bore to the character He assumed, in circumstances of peril and alarm, would have made these men pause in their wicked career.

But *the high priest rent his clothes*. It was, indeed, a common expression of grief and indignation to which he had now recourse, but even if his grief and indignation had been real, the dignity of his character should have lifted him above such a vulgar expression of his feelings.

*What further need have we of witnesses?* &c.; literally, “What further need have we of testimony,” for, *now ye*, as opposed to what has been reported from other sources, *have heard his blasphemy*. “In claiming, as He has claimed, to be the Messiah, in asserting that He was the Son of God, and therefore equal in dignity with the Father, and that He would yet sit at His right hand, He has claimed what belongs to no man, and what is therefore an invasion of the Divine prerogative.”

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 on 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).

67. "Then, did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands, 68. Saying, ) Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who he is that smote thee?"  
 \*Is. l. 6, and liii. 3; chap. xxvii. 30. \*Luke xxii. 63; John xix. 3. \*Mark xiv. 65; Luke xxii. 64.

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. *They spit in his face.* So literally were the words of the prophet fulfilled (Isa. i. 6), "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." To this monstrous indignity, which was afterward repeated (Matt. xxvii. 30), it will be observed that both Matthew and Mark assign the foremost rank (see Mark xiv. 66), as, indeed, it is found to occupy a distinct place in our Saviour's own predictions of His approaching humiliation (Mark x. 34; Luke xviii. 32; see Deut. xxv. 9; Num. xii. 14.) *And buffeted him*, literally, *struck him with the fist*, in contradistinction to the act, designated in the next clause, by smiting him with the palms of their hands, which in the original answers very well to our word *slap*, as with the open hand. These represent the variety of ways by which they put Him to pain, and expressed their contempt of Him.

*Saying, Prophecy unto us, &c.* How it required the power of prophecy in Jesus to tell who smote Him, Matthew does not explain, nor, had we this Gospel alone, should we be able to tell. But we learn from other Evangelists (Mark xiv. 65; Luke xxii. 64), that they "covered his face," then smote Him, and then, in ridicule of His title as prophet, bade Him prophecy which was His smiter. On the other hand, Mark omits to tell what was the prophecy demanded. Thus, by a double tally the two Evangelists supplement each other. The truth of the Gospels find much support from such undesigned coincidences as these.

Let it never surprise us, if we have to endure mockery, and ridicule, and false reports, because we belong to Christ. The disciple is not greater than his Master,

nor the servant than his Lord. If lies and insults were heaped upon our Saviour, we need not wonder if the same weapons are constantly used against His people. It is one of Satan's great devices to blacken the character of godly men, and bring them into contempt. The lives of Luther, Cranmer, Calvin and Wesley supply abundant examples of this. If we are ever called upon to suffer in this way, let us bear it patiently. We drink the same cup that was drunk by our beloved Lord. But there is one great difference. At the worst we only drink a few little drops—He drank the cup to the very dregs.

69. ¶ "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee."

\*Mark xiv. 66; Luke xxii. 55; John xviii. 16, 17, 25.

*Sat without, i. e.*, outside of the apartment in which Jesus was examined. *In the palace.* For the meaning of the word *palace*, see on verse 58. The apartment here intended, was at one end open to the air. Peter still remained in that part of the house. Thus he was *without*, that is, outside, or *beneath*, as it is expressed by Mark (xiv. 66), in respect to the interior rooms of the building to which the Sanhedrim, or the high priest, had retired.

*A damsel*—one of the maid servants of the high priest. (Mark xiv. 66.) It is customary, even at the present day, in the East, for the doors of the wealthy to be superintended by a portress, who receives a fee for her services from the visitors. *With Jesus, i. e.*, one of His party. The damsel expressed her suspicions to others before she addressed Peter. (Luke xxii. 56.)

The disciples of Christ cannot long be concealed among the multitude of the profligate children of this world. Had Peter, like the rest, inveighed against Christ, and ridiculed His doctrines, he would have avoided all suspicion. But as he remained silent, and, possibly, was sometimes unable to suppress his sighs, being under such a violent perturbation of mind, he was soon suspected to be one of the disciples of Jesus. Thus it is still with the children of God, when they mingle with the wicked. They are not long undistinguished from those about them.

70. But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

*Denied before them all.* He spoke openly and boldly, the more effectually to screen himself from all further suspicion of belonging to the party of Jesus. *I know not, &c.*—a method of denying, as much as to say, I am conscious of not being what thou hast said. (See Luke xxii. 57; John xviii. 17.) Perhaps his fellow-disciple, John, heard this denial. (See on verse 69.) 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.

71. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

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 porch*, the entrance to the small apartment between the outer door and the large hall in the centre of the building. He does not venture to seek to have the door opened, that he may not elicit any unfavorable conjectures, and is therefore obliged to return to his former place. This very quiet again excites suspicion.

*Another maid saw him, &c.* The word “maid,” as the italics indicate, is supplied by the translators. “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.

*This fellow, &c.* This was added by way of reproach. (See on verse 69.)

*And again he denied, &c.* Such an alarming publicity was now given to the charge of his being in the company of Jesus, that Peter felt the necessity of warding off suspicion, by more vehement protestations of his total ignorance of the man. One sin hardens the heart, and disposes it for the commission of another. Some dark spirit then whispers in our ear that the repetition cannot make us more culpable, since

God is wont not to number but to weigh our sins, or else, that by persisting in the commission of any particular sin, we only manifest that we do not exactly regard it as sin, and have, therefore, in some measure, sinned ignorantly. 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.

The new man, in those who are regenerate, does not attain to such an unlimited superiority over the old as no longer to require, on all occasions, the continuance of Divine influence for the overcoming and restraining of the latter. Hence, the Lord’s pointed admonition to His disciples to watch and pray lest they fall into temptation.

73. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee.—Luke xxii. 59.

*After a while. They that stood by.* Matthew here expresses himself generally, while Luke (xxii. 59), observes more particularly that “another” affirmed, *Thy speech bewrayeth thee.* As Peter 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 does not give them likewise a penitent heart.

74. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. <sup>5</sup>Mark xiv. 71.

On this occasion Peter not only denied his Lord, but *began to curse and to swear.* 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.

*And immediately 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. "An awakener of some kind or other," it has well been said, "is appointed to every one. Wherever we may be, there are voices which call us to repentance. Nature, as well as our whole life, is full of them, only our ears are heavy and will not hear. There is an awakening call in the rolling thunder, which is a herald of infinite majesty; in the lightning, which darts down before thee, carrying with it destruction; in the stars, which look down upon thee from such remote regions, as if they would say, 'How far, O man! art thou cast out from thy home?' " &c.

75. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.'  
Verse 34: Mark xiv. 30; Luke xxii. 61, 62; John xiii. 38.

*Peter remembered.* Probably our Lord cast His glance as He was led from Annas to Caiaphas. The door of the apartment, where Jesus was before the high priest, may have been opened upon the court, and Peter may have painfully found himself denying and swearing under his Lord's glance. It does not appear that Peter came into the examination-room, or was present with his Lord. By a tender and compassionate look (see Luke xxii. 6,)—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, went alone in the darkness of the night, and *wept bitterly.*

His sin was certainly very aggravated, and, with all his failings, he was a man of very tender affections and great ingenuousness. But sorrow arising from such a source is not peculiar to our Apostle. All

the people of God should feel a penitent disposition at the review of their sin, which furnishes abundant material for self-accusation and contrition.

In Peter's recovery and rising again by repentance, there is observable, 1. The suddenness of his repentance. Sin committed by surprise, and through the prevalence of a temptation that suddenly assaults us, is much sooner repented of than where the sin is presumptuous and deliberate. 2. The means of his repentance: (1) the crowing of the cock. As the voice of the maid occasioned him to sin, so the voice of the cock occasioned him to reflect. (2) Christ's pitiful but piercing look, and Peter's remembering His words. The efficacy of Christ's word, in order to sound repentance, depends not upon the historical remembrance of it, but upon the close application of it to every man's conscience. To these means the Holy Spirit gave efficacy. 3. Peter's repentance was secret. Solitariness is most agreeable to an afflicted spirit. 4. His repentance was deep and thorough. Sin must always be followed with sorrow. 5. His repentance was abiding. Ecclesiastical history reports that ever after, when Peter heard the crowing of the cock, he fell upon his knees and wept. Others say that he was wont to rise at midnight, and spend the time in prayer and humiliation, between cock-crowing and daylight. 6. Peter was pardoned freely and fully (John xx. 21; Mark xvi. 7; John xxi. 15), and having had much forgiven, he loved much. How must these people have been surprised, when they saw—as no doubt some of them did—this timorous disciple, within the compass of a few weeks, when he was brought with John before the council, not only maintaining the honor of Jesus, but charging the murder of "the Prince of life" on the chief men of the nation, and warning them of their guilt and danger in consequence of it.

The story of Peter teaches us, 1. How small and gradual are the steps by which men may go down into great sins. 2. How very far a believer may backslide. 3. The infinite mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. 4. How bitter sin is to believers, when they have fallen into it and discovered their fall. There are moments in the

believer's experience, in which he learns more of his own wickedness, and of his Lord's goodness, than he has learned in years that have gone before. True penitence is a mixture of sorrow and faith. The penitent says with sorrow, "My sin is ever before me," and with faith, "There is

forgiveness with Thee." Such is the broken heart which God will not despise. Let this be our prayer:

"If near the pit I rashly stray,  
 Before I wholly fall away,  
 The keen conviction dart:  
 Recall me by that pitying look,  
 That kind, upbraiding glance which broke  
 Unfaithful Peter's heart."

1. What did Jesus say to His disciples? 2. Who assembled to consult for putting Him to death? 3. What occurred in the house of Simon? 4. What objection to this did the disciples make? 5. What did Christ reply? 6. What did Jesus send His disciples to prepare? 7. Where did He send them? 8. What took place at the observance of the Passover? 9. Explain the institution of the Lord's Supper. 10. What do the terms our Saviour there used, mean? 11. What is said about the singing of a hymn? 12. What did Jesus say to His disciples in the Mount of Olives? 13. What did Peter answer? 14. Whom did Christ take with Him to Gethsemane? 15. State what took place there. 16. Where was Jesus then led by His enemies? 17. Mention the particulars of Peter's denial of Him. 18. Also the particulars of His deep repentance.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

1 *Christ is delivered bound to Pilate.* 3. *Judas hangeth himself.* 19 *Pilate, admonished of his wife,* 24 *washeth his hands:* 26 *and looeth Barabbas.* 29 *Christ is crowned with thorns,* 34 *crucified,* 40 *reviled,* 50 *dieth, and is buried:* 66 *his sepulchre is sealed, and watched.*

WHEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: 2. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

\*Psa. ii. 2; Mark xv. 1; Luke xxii. 66, xxiii. 1; John xviii. 28. †Gen. xxii. 9; Acts ix. 13, 20; 2 Tim. ii. 9. ‡Chap. xx. 19; Acts iii. 13.

*The morning*—of Friday, the day of the crucifixion. The meeting must have taken place after six o'clock in the morning. *All the chief priests, &c.* The Sanhedrim. *Took counsel against Jesus, &c.* They had previously adjudged him worthy of death for blasphemy. Their purpose in the present consultation was, doubtless, to devise some way of effecting this without exciting a popular commotion. *When they had bound him.* Jesus had been before bound, for security, by the officers who apprehended Him. (See John xviii. 12.) He was now bound as a common malefactor.

*Delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.* The usual abode of the Roman governor was at Cæsarea Palæstina, but he usually came over to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, with a large body of soldiers, to

keep the multitude in awe at that season. In Jerusalem, he held his abode in the palace built by the elder Herod, but was sometimes in the Tower of Antonia, the strong fortress commanding the temple. It is not certain to which of these places our Lord was taken, but most probably to the former. Pilate, who was at this time the governor or procurator over Judea, was placed in this office by Tiberius, then emperor of Rome. He was noted for his severity, cruelty and despotic will. Many Jews, at different times, were massacred by his order.

3. † Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, † repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4. Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

‡ Chap. xxvi. 14, 15. † Job xx. 5, 51, 29; 2 Cor. vii. 10. ‡ Ex. ix. 27; 1 Sam. xv. 24; Rom. iii. 19. † 2 Sam. xvii. 23; Acts i. 18.

*Then Judas, &c.* Matthew now interrupts his narrative of the fate of the Saviour to give his final account of Judas. *When he saw that he was condemned.* The actual perception of the result, and the clear consciousness of the enormity of the crime, produced in Judas's mind a revulsion.

*Repented himself*—was filled with remorse and anguish. As the issue too sadly showed,

it was "the sorrow of the world which worketh death." (2 Cor. vii. 10.) Some commentators have thought that Judas did not imagine or expect that Jesus would be condemned to death, but supposed either that He would convey Himself away from His persecutors, or that He would prove His innocence to the satisfaction of His judges, or at the most, some slight punishment would be inflicted upon Him. One would not wish to load even the worst of men with more guilt than really belongs to them; but from considering the character of Judas, and comparing together all the circumstances of the case, it appears to us more probable that the acquittal or condemnation of Jesus never entered into his contemplation.

*And brought again the thirty pieces of silver.* The way of spurious penitence, in contradistinction to the genuine repentance of Peter. His first disposition is to attempt some outward rectification of his deed in the sight of men, without previous humiliation before God, and seeking of refuge with Him. *I have sinned*, rather, "I have erred." This confession was extorted by remorse alone. There was not connected with it any humiliation before God, any prayer for pardon or desire to return to Christ. A remarkable illustration of the power of an awakened conscience. A short time before, the promise of this sordid pelf was temptation enough to his covetous heart to outweigh the most overwhelming obligations of duty and love; now, the possession of it so lashes him that he cannot use it—cannot even keep it. *Innocent blood.* What an attestation this to the spotlessness of the character of Jesus! Had there been a single impropriety in all the most confidential intercourse of Jesus with His disciples, Judas would at this time have exposed it.

A single sin found out in Christ would have been a great comfort and a sweet solace to the traitor in the tumult which he felt within. But however diligently he sought, however much he exerted his ingenuity, and recalled to mind all the acts of his Master's life, virtues presented themselves in abundance, a luminous sea of holiness shone upon him from it; but not one dark point could he discover, nor did

the slightest spot meet his scrutinizing eye. How annihilating the result. Judas is compelled to justify his conscience, which accuses him as being the betrayer of the Holy One, and condemns him as the murderer of innocence. He finds nothing to assist him in weakening the sentence, and is forced to endure the most horrible curse that ever made a human soul to tremble.

*What is that to us?* The brevity of the original—literally, *what to us?*—imparts great point to the contemptuous sneer with which they replied to the heart-rending confession of Judas. *See thou to that*, literally, *thou wilt see.* It is your business. We have nothing to do with it. Judas received no sympathy or word of comfort from the chief priests. How many like him find to their sorrow that it was the *treason*, and not the *traitor*, which was loved.

*And he cast down, &c.* This was done, probably, near the temple door, where the boxes stood to receive the free-will offerings of the people, for the support and repairs of the sacred edifice. In this scene we perceive something dreadfully retributive, when we call to mind the hypocritical words, "Why was not this ointment sold, and the money given to the poor?" with which the unhappy disciple once presumed to deprecate Mary's laudable work of love. He is now compelled, although with other money, to verify, in an awful manner, what he then uttered in dissimulation. *Hanged himself.* "Judas," says one, "may part with his life, but sin does not, on this account, depart from him. He can leave the world, but his impious act follows him across its boundaries."

6. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

*It is not lawful.* Mark their miserable inconsistency and superstition. How often are religious scruples thus found to dwell with men who have sold themselves to work all manner of iniquity. The treasury had probably furnished the very pieces of silver which it is now deemed so sinful to replace there. *The treasury.* The place where the people brought their free-will offerings or gifts for the service of the temple. Judas, by throwing down the thirty shekels in the temple among the priests, meant them to be a gift, and thus

in some measure expiate his atrocity. *Because it is the price of blood.* The law required (Deut. xxiii. 18) that no money procured in a shameful or base manner, should be devoted to the service of God. However glad the chief priests were to have obtained, in any way, possession of Jesus, yet they would readily grant that Judas had obtained his money very dishonorably.

7. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8. Wherefore that field was called, <sup>b</sup>The field of blood, unto this day.  
<sup>a</sup>Acts i. 19.

*The potter's field.* This plat of ground, which probably had been the site of a pottery, lay without the wall of the city, on the south-east corner, about a mile from the temple. The price may seem small, but this may be accounted for by supposing that the soil had been so entirely exhausted by the potters, as to render it unfit for the purposes of husbandry. These wicked men thought that the Gentile strangers who happened to die at Jerusalem, would be fitly provided for, if the price of a criminal's blood were bestowed in the purchase of a field where to bury them. But that criminal was CHRIST—the *Saviour* of the Gentiles; so that, as in the case of Abraham of old, a *burial place* (and that bought with *Christ's* blood) became the first possession of the Gentile Church, and it was theirs at a time when God gave them none inheritance in the land, not even so much as to set their foot on, though He had promised that He would give them the whole earth for a possession. (Consider Gen. xxiii.; Acts vii. 5.) *Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood.* The name stood as a memento of the direful sale and execution. *Unto this day*—unto the time that Matthew writes. This was, perhaps, about eight years of interval. The field of blood, or, *Aceldama* (Acts i. 19), is on the steep face of the southern hill, opposite Mount Zion, which bounds the valley of Ben Hinnom. Tradition points out the spot. "In a corner where some graves or natural caves, in a semi-dilapidated condition, are found," says *Krafft*, in his *Topography of Jerusalem*, "is the *Aceldama*, or field of blood of tradition. In support of the accuracy of this view, I may state that above it there

is a considerable *stratum* of white clay, where I repeatedly observed people."

9. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.  
<sup>1</sup>Zech. xi. 12, 13. <sup>2</sup>Or, *whom they bought of the children of Israel.*

Never was a complicated prophecy, otherwise hopelessly dark, more marvelously fulfilled. Various conjectures have been formed to account for Matthew's ascribing to Jeremiah a prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. But since with this book he was plainly familiar, having quoted one of its most remarkable prophecies of Christ but a few chapters before (chap. xxi. 4, 5,) the question is one of more critical interest than real importance. Perhaps the true explanation is the following, from *Lightfoot*: "Jeremiah of old had the first place among the prophets, and hereby he comes to be mentioned above all the rest in chap. xvi. 14, because he stood first in the volume of the prophets—as he proves from the learned *David Kimchi*—therefore he is first named. When, therefore, Matthew produceth a text of Zechariah under the name of Jeremy, he only cites the words of the volume of the prophets under his name who stood first in the volume of the prophets. Of which sort is that also of our Saviour (Luke xxiv. 44), 'all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Law, and the Prophets, and the Psalms,' or the Book of *Hagiographa*, in which the Psalms were placed first."

11. And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.  
<sup>k</sup>Mark xv. 2; Luke xxiii. 3; John xviii. 33. <sup>l</sup>John xviii. 37; 1 Tim. vi. 13.

*Stood before the governor.* The Sanhedrim in a body, followed by their partisans, marched with their prisoner from the palace of Caiaphas to Pilate's abode, which probably was at the tower of Antonia, north of the temple. *Art thou the king? &c.* The fullest and most striking account of the colloquy between our Lord and Pilate is given by John, and full notes belong to the commentary upon that Evangelist. *Thou sayest*—an affirmative answer of the question. It is as *thou sayest.*

12. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.  
<sup>m</sup>Chap. xxvi. 63; John xix. 9.

The silence of Jesus before accusers, who adduced nothing new, was a reaffirmation of what He had said before.

13. Then said Pilate unto him, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?"  
"Chap. xxvi. 62; John xix. 10.

Pilate wished to get some further information, on which he could either convict or acquit Jesus. His curiosity also may have been so awakened by the previous words of our Lord, that he hoped to hear something further upon the theme on which he had touched. (John xviii. 17.) But from this time on through the whole trial, except in one instance related by John (xix. 12), he maintained a silence, broken by no question, pain or indignity. (Comp. Isa. liii. 7.)

14. And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

The governor wondered at the patience and equanimity of Jesus, while His adversaries were expressing so determined a hostility against Him.

15. "Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. 16. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas."  
"Mark xv. 6; Luke xxiii. 17; John xviii. 30.

At that feast—It is a general statement, applying to the Passover as held from year to year. Of the custom scarcely anything is known. It is remarkable that such sticklers for the law allowed themselves to be participants in sustaining a custom which to them was a violation of the law of Moses. That law said (Ex. xxi. 12), *He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall surely be put to death*; and Barabbas, a notable, noted, prisoner, was guilty of insurrection, robbery, and murder, the first of which crimes was the very one of which they had accused Jesus, and of the last two of which they did not pretend that he was guilty.

17. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?  
 18. For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.  
"Prov. xxvii. 4; Isa. xxvii. 11.

Pilate had by this time discovered how matters stood. In his crooked policy, accordingly, he calculates upon certain success, when he should place the notorious or distinguished criminal side by side with Jesus, for the Jews to choose which of the two should be released. For envy. The Evangelist mentions here, in a historical connection, envy as the cause of all the

hostility manifested against Jesus, as if it were something well understood.

19. ¶ When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.  
"Zech. ix. 9; 1 John ii. 1.

When he was set. In the very moment of urgent business. In the bustle of such a time, announcements of a strange character ought not to be neglected. *The judgment seat.* The dream made a strong impression, but the woman understood its meaning better after the fulfillment began. Perhaps she had the dream when Pilate was already engaged in the business. *His wife*—called Procla, by tradition. *Saying.* By this warning a great favor was shown to the governor, in preference to the Jews, who had been sufficiently warned from other sources. The warnings which God sends, by various means, to deter men from wickedness, will eventually leave many of them the more inexcusable. *Nothing*—she says, in one word. So should Pilate have acted in the matter, without delay. *Just.* So Pilate calls Him also (verse 24), with a feeble regard to these words of his wife.

20. "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus."  
"Mark xv. 11; Luke xxiii. 18; John xviii. 40; Acts viii. 14.

*Persuaded the multitude.* An unstable crowd they might easily influence. Jesus they might contemptuously speak of as a Galilean, as one who had mocked their hopes, and who, instead of being the victorious king they had anticipated, was now a detected impostor and a forlorn captive.

21. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

*They said, Barabbas.* Barabbas was 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. (John xviii. 40.) 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 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.

22. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified. 23. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. 24. ¶ When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. 25. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

¶ Jer. xxvi. 15. ¶ Deut. xxi. 6. ¶ Deut. xix. 10; Josh. ii. 19; 2 Sam. i. 16; 1 Kings ii. 32; Acts v. 28.

When informed by his wife of her dream, Pilate seems to have remonstrated again with the people. Finding he could prevail nothing, he took water and washed his hands before the people, saying, *I am innocent*, &c., as if that action and declaration could avail to free him from his own accountableness. What a picture is he of that most unhappy character, a man wavering between the convictions of conscience and the allurements of temptation, "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed!" How many, in this way, resort to all manner of contrivances to avoid taking that plain line which conscience points to! They consult others, hoping for an opinion favorable to their secret wishes, and thinking to shift the responsibility on their advisers. They propose some half measure, and try to avoid the necessity of acting at all; like Pilate, they try to wash their hands of a question in which they

see the right, but are afraid of following it, so at length they end in violating conscience. May we learn hence a lesson never to be forgotten, that he who tampers with the faithful warnings of conscience, is like one who, having to cross a pathless waste, should blind the eyes of the only guide able to conduct him over it! Let us obey conscience, and all difficulties by degrees will vanish before us. The first step is often the only difficult step. Disobey conscience, and you little know what a web of entanglements you are weaving for yourself, of what a harvest of shame, perplexity, self-reproach, you are sowing the seeds! Conscience may be called "the candle of the Lord" in your heart. Do not put it out.

*His blood be on us*, &c. This terrible imprecation of wrath upon themselves and offspring, has had a most signal fulfillment. In less than forty years from this exclamation, the proud city of Jerusalem was laid in ashes by the torches of the Romans, and scarcely so much wood could be procured as sufficed to prepare crosses for the children of Abraham; and the nation has ever since been exposed to incessant injuries from man, and left as an anathema from God, as still from age to age, persisting in the sin of their fathers, and justifying it as the deserved punishment of a deceiver.

Let us learn from these verses the desperate wickedness of human nature. There are few things so little believed and realized. Men fancy that if they saw a perfect person they would love and admire him. They flatter themselves that it is the inconsistency of professing Christians which they dislike, and not their religion. They forget that when a really perfect man was on earth, in the person of the Son of God, He was hated and put to death. That single fact goes far to prove the truth of *Edwards'* remark: "Unconverted men would kill God, if they could get at Him."

26. ¶ Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

¶ Isa. liii. 5; Mark xv. 15; Luke xxiii. 16, 24, 25.

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. 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 Pilate released.

*Scourged Jesus.* (See Luke xviii. 32; Isa. l. 6.) Among the Romans, scourging was always inflicted previously to crucifixion, as appears from several passages in their writings. The scourge was composed of *flagella*, which were extremely sharp, mostly interwoven with sheep bones, sometimes composed of ox-nerves, and hence termed by *Horace*, "horrible." Such scourging preceded the capital punishment of slaves: *rods* were used with the free. The criminal was fastened to a post or pillar, so that both the breast and back were exposed. "Jesus is chastised," says one, "when men tear the crown of deity from His brow, and when they silently brand Him as a deceiver and blasphemer, but then begin to commend His excellences and virtues, and thus release Him after having maltreated Him. They deny that He is the only way to heaven, although He Himself has said so, and in this way He is chastised. But then, again, they applaud Him as the most eminent of teachers, and thus He is let go. Men chastise Him by insulting His members upon earth, and vilifying those who boast of His meritorious sufferings as the sole ground of their salvation, but again release Him by making an outward obeisance at His communion-table, or by confessing that He was more than Socrates or Solon. Alas! we all carry about with us, by nature, a secret scourge for the Lord Jesus, and never omit to use it in one way or other. But if our conscience asks, after such a chastising, why we are so averse and opposed to this Just One, who never injured us, we are wont, instead of feeling penitent, to hide our own naughtiness behind the traitorous kisses we bestow upon Him, and again release the ill-treated Saviour by dubious marks of respect."

*Delivered him to be crucified.* Pilate seems to have been present when Jesus was scourged, but now he consigns Him to the

soldiers to lead Him forth to execution. This appears from the next verse.

27. \*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.—\*Mark xv. 16; John xix. 2.

What is here called *the common hall*, and the Judgment Hall (John xviii. 28, 33, xix. 9), was the "Prætorium!" (Luke xv. 16), a magnificent edifice in the upper part of the city, which had been formerly Herod's palace. This the Roman procurators (whose ordinary residence was at Cæsarea) occupied when at Jerusalem. In front of this edifice was the *tribunal*. Jesus was *first* led to the interior part of the prætorium, namely, the *aula*, an open court. *Whole band.* There were five cohorts of soldiers, comprising each about 600 men, retained by the governor at Cæsarea, and one at Jerusalem. This one whole Roman cohort is therefore now summoned to perform or witness the degradation of the victim.

28. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.—\*Luke xxiii. 11.

*They stripped him*, that is, of his mantle. *A scarlet robe.* Pilate's soldiers, in derision of the claim which they knew Jesus had made to be king of the Jews, placed on Him, instead of His own mantle, an old military robe, called *sagum*. It was, in all probability, the same robe in which Herod had arrayed him (Luke xxiii. 11) and which, having been removed at this time in order that Jesus might be scourged, was now replaced.

The object of the soldiers was to make their derision notorious, and cover Christ with the most flagrant shame. To this end they took from Him what was His own, and gave to Him what did not belong to Him. And how frequently have we done the same, withholding from Him the homage due to His name, and putting Him to shame by our lives. We now execrate the conduct of those who thus mocked the Son of God, but have we not done worse? They put on Him a scarlet robe: our sins baptized Him in His blood. How naked would our souls have been, had not the body of Christ been thus clothed in the garb of apparent infamy and death! He deserved not the shame which they would fain have put upon Him, and had He not robed Himself in

our nature, that He might bring us shining raiment from heaven, the scarlet robe had never been His.

29. ¶ And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!  
1 Ps. xxxv. 15, 16, lxxix. 19; Isa. xlix. 7, liii. 3; Heb. xii. 2, 3.

Had *platted*, that is, *woven together*, or having made a wreath. A *crown of thorns*, made doubtless of the thorn bush, or some prickly shrub, so as to be the means of pain as well as contempt. *Upon his head*. In the form of a garland or diadem. The whole head was not covered, but it was placed in a circle round the temples. This crown was in mockery of a regal crown, as the purple robe was in mockery of the imperial purple. The perpetrators of this action designed by it nothing beyond the gratification of their wanton cruelty. But when we call to mind that the second Adam was at this very time submitting Himself to the curse of God—and couple with this the recorded fact that the thorn and the thistle were the fruits of that curse, as it took effect upon the ground, it seems to be a natural inference that the cruel device was overruled by God, to the expression of a truth which He would have us discern and ponder. Being the immediate produce of the curse, the thorn was an appropriate decoration for the Man of the curse. But more than this. The endurance of the thorn was the endurance of sin's penalty, as it visited not only the transgressor, but the place of his residence. Now, the endurance of a penalty by Christ, in His vicarious character, involves and was ultimately issue in the cancelling of the penalty. And accordingly the circumstance of our Lord's having worn and suffered from a crown of thorns, would seem to intimate that a revocation of the sentence which was passed upon the soil (Gen. iii. 18), is in God's design—a revocation which may possibly involve the fulfillment, in a literal sense, of the prediction that "*instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree.*" (Isa. lv. 13. Consider in connection, Gen. iii. 19; Luke xxii. 44.)

And a *reed in his right hand*—in mockery of the regal *sceptre*. It was thus denoted

that our Lord's kingdom, of which He made mention before Pilate, and which Paul terms "a kingdom which cannot be moved" (Heb. xii. 28), was a weak and unstable kingdom, and that for His subjects to expect any protection from Him was to lean on a broken reed. (Isa. xxxvi. 6.) The reed is a plant with a hollow, jointed stalk, growing in wet grounds. It was sometimes used for light walking canes, and one may have been taken from the bystanders for the present purpose. *And bowed the knee before him, &c.*—doing Him derisive homage, in the form used on approaching the emperors. (See on following verse.)

30. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.—2 Isa. 1. 6; chap. xxvi. 67.

Their cruelty, and the intoxication of wickedness, keep them from carrying out to the close the caricature exactly. The Satanic mockery changes into brutal maltreatment. *Spit upon him*. This was a token of the deepest contempt and insult, and a repetition of the indignity received before the high priest. (Chap. xxvi. 67.) *Smote him on the head*. John says (xix. 3) that they smote Him with their hands. The reed, therefore, which would have been too light to inflict much pain except on the head, was caught from His hand to smite the thorny crown into His head, which could not have been done with the naked hand. The best comment on these affecting details is to *cover the face*. Just think, for one moment, on whom it was these indignities were heaped. The Lord who made the heavens and the earth, the King of Glory, who had but to speak, and legions of angels would be His cohorts, and all the armies of the skies would obey His behests instantly. Yet He voluntarily submitted to shame that He might expiate our transgressions. He endured the cross that we might wear a blood-purchased, but a glorious and unfading crown. During all this suffering, we read nothing of an expression that Jesus uttered, of a re-monstration that He made. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." "Reviled, He reviled not again." Truly, this was the Son of God.

31. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.—2 Isa. liii. 7.

After they had mocked him—after the presentation to the people (John xix. 5) had taken place—Pilate's last attempt to deliver Him. After the final decision they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him. "The change of garments which took place in the court of the prætorium," says Dr. F. W. Krummacher, "reminds me of an act in our own life. In the days of our blindness we had also divested the Lord Jesus of the glory of His inherent splendor, while presuming to deny one or other particular concerning Him, so as to leave Him little more than the title of a Jewish rabbi, or the Sage of Nazareth. But how did we afterward alter our course, when the Lord stripped us of the garments of our imaginary righteousness, and in the mirror of His law exhibited to us our real form. How hastily did we then put upon Immanuel His own raiment? We first gave thee back thy Messiah's crown, and then thy sacrificial and priestly robes, and, finally, thy diadem as the King of Glory; for the awakened necessities of our hearts had rectified our vision, and sharpened it for thy beauty. Amid many tears of repentance and delight, we again clothed thee in thy original attire. Thou now standest before us in thy full and complete array, and we will never cease to bow the knee before thee, and to rejoice, and say with Jacob, 'Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.'"

And led him away to crucify him. Our Lord had himself always prophesied, under different forms of expression, that by His countrymen He would be given up to the heathen, and that by their hands He would be crucified, or "lifted up," that is, lifted up on the cross. This was a Roman and not a Jewish punishment, and therefore showed His prescience that His death, although brought about by the Jews, would be inflicted by the Romans, who introduced this form of capital punishment in all their wide dominions, except for those who had the privilege of Roman citizens, who were beheaded. It was essentially the most ignominious form of death, as hanging is with us.

<sup>32</sup> And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.  
<sup>33</sup> Num. xv. 35; 1 Kings xxi. 13; Acts vii. 58; Heb. xiii. 12. <sup>34</sup> Mark xv. 21; Luke xxiii. 26.

As they came out, that is, from the city. It was customary for punishments of this nature to be inflicted outside of the city. (Compare Num. xv. 35; 1 Kings xxi. 13.) A man of Cyrene, &c. Cyrene was a city of Lybya, 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.

Him they compelled to bear his cross. (See on verse 35.) 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, and He went forth, bearing it. As Isaac, the illustrious type of the Redeemer, carried the wood for the burnt offering, so Jesus carried His cross. Weak, however, and exhausted by suffering and watchfulness, He probably sank under the heavy burden.

We do not know certainly that Simon was *unwilling* to bear the cross, as he did either entirely in Christ's room, or sharing part of its weight, for the choice was not given to him. The soldiers *commanded* him to do this public service. It is supposed by some, that he had come from Cyrene to the Passover, for, as they say, there seems no reason why he should have been selected, but that his being a stranger marked him out for a task too degrading to be forced upon a native Jew. There were probably disciples in the crowd who would have been glad to volunteer to perform this office for their revered Master, but were deterred by the fear of bringing suspicion upon themselves. Others think that Simon was known to be a favorer of Jesus, and that he was singled out on account of the special marks of interest and sympathy he manifested. This is rendered probable by the fact that a number of the early converts to Christianity were members of the Cyrenian synagogue (see Acts ii. 10, vi. 9, xi. 19, 20.)

The only difficulty in this view is that a disciple of Jesus should have been away that morning, and coming in just then. But the notice of Mark (xv. 21), that he was "the father of Alexander and Rufus," persons evidently well known to the early Church, suggests that he and his did afterward become eminent disciples, and that as now, literally, so afterward did he spiritually take up his cross and follow Him, finding thus a glorious reward for his labor.

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 of Mount Calvary, or without stretching forth a hand to help and succor him.

33. †And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, 34. †They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. †Mark xv. 22; Luke xxiii. 33; John xix. 17. †Ps. lxxix. 21; see verse 45.

*Golgotha.* A Hebrew word from the Chaldee *Gol-gotha*, signifying a *skull-place*, Latin *Calvaria*, whence this knoll is called in Luke *Calvary*. (xxiii. 33.) There was a hidden reason why God led men to select this polluted place for the Redeemer's execution. He had commanded the high priest, once a year to sprinkle the blood of a bullock and of a goat upon the mercy-seat in the Holiest of holies, to make atonement for sin. The *bodies* of these beasts were taken to a place outside the camp, or city, and burned. Their blood represented the precious blood of Christ, which pleads for us in the presence of God. *Because His blood atones for sin, therefore His body* was taken to a loathsome spot outside the city of Jerusalem. (See Heb. xiii. 11, 12.)

*Vinegar to drink mingled with gall.* The custom prevailed among the ancients to give criminals that were led to execution a drink that intoxicated and stupefied. For this purpose wine of an inferior quality, mixed with narcotic herbs, was used. This wine was called sharp-wine, vinegar, also wine. (Mark xv. 23.) It

was mixed, according to Mark, with "myrrh;" according to Matthew with "gall," that is, with bitter and stupefying herbs, such as wormwood, poppy, myrrh and the like. By offering Christ this drink, an ancient prophecy of the Messiah was literally fulfilled. (Ps. lxix. 21.) We may observe here how Matthew often adopts in his narrative the very words of prophecy, where one or more of the other Evangelists give the matter of fact detail.

*And when he had tasted, &c.* Our Lord rejected the medicated draught, as His purpose was to suffer death in all its bitterness—to drink the dregs of the cup which His heavenly Father had given Him. At a subsequent period, Jesus received a little vinegar, which had been soaked into a sponge, and handed to Him on a reed of hyssop. This was not a stupefying drug, but the sour wine, which was the common drink of the Roman soldiers, and a vessel of which was, probably, laid there for the refreshment of the guard. The canes of the hyssop shrub were frequently between three and four feet long, and of course sufficient in a man's hand to reach the highest elevation of the cross.

35. †And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, †They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. †Mark xv. 24; Luke xxiii. 34. †John xix. 24.

*They crucified him.* The cross itself consisted of two large beams placed across each other in the form of the Roman letter T. These, which were carried separately to the place of execution, were there laid and secured together on the ground, and the victim for whom it was prepared, was stripped of all His dress, except a covering about His loins. (See James 256-7, and on Luke xxiii. 33.) Christ crucified is *the centre of Christian union*. Look at the one Church of God. On what platform does it stand? What is its foundation? Where do all believers look for pardon, for acceptance, for sanctifying grace? Where do they wash, day by day, the constant contractions of guilt? Where do they look for present peace and future hope? Are they not all hanging on Christ? Are they not all clinging to Christ? Do not all put on the one righteousness of Christ? Are they

not all living on Christ as their sanctification? Surely, this were enough to make them regard the minor points on which they differ as of little moment in comparison with the grand essential points on which they are agreed, and to unite them in Christian union and fellowship.

*Parted his garments, &c.* The clothes of criminals were usually given as a perquisite to the guards, and, as the guard was always composed of four soldiers, such a distribution was agreed upon as gave each an equal share of the garments, or where the poverty of the dying man's wardrobe did not admit of a partition among so many, recourse was had to dice to determine which should be the possessor. It was in the former way that all the dress of Jesus was divided among the soldiers, with the exception of the linen tunic, which, made to reach down to the ankles and to fit closely to the body, was without seam, woven from the top throughout, and being probably the elaborate work and gift of some of those pious women who belonged to the company of Jesus, was thought too valuable to be cut down into pieces, and was therefore assigned by the casting of lots.

*That it might be fulfilled, &c.* (Ps. xxii. 18.) The language of the psalm was literally applicable to the conduct of the soldiers. Though they had no intention of fulfilling anything which had been written concerning Christ, yet the manner in which they conducted toward Him exactly accorded with what inspired men had written. 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.

<sup>36.</sup> <sup>a</sup>And sitting down they watched him there: 37. And <sup>b</sup>set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>38</sup> Verse 34. <sup>c</sup>Mark xv. 26; Luke xxiii. 33; John xix. 19.

On such occasions, the soldiers who amused themselves with the division of the criminal's property, were the guard who were appointed to watch at the foot of the cross during the whole progress of the execution, and to prohibit any of the spectators from approaching to the rescue of the prisoner, or from taking away the body till life was totally extinct.

*And over his head his accusation written, &c.* It was usual for the Romans to put a "title" or inscription on the transverse beam of the cross, to denote the offense of the crucified person, a custom observed also by the Turks, in their analogous 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 (John xix. 20), 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 us of this title 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.

<sup>33.</sup> <sup>d</sup>Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. <sup>e</sup>Isa. liii. 12; Mark xv. 27; Luke xxiii. 32, 33; John xix. 18.

*Two thieves.* Pilate did not reside at 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 was fulfilled: "He was numbered with the transgressors." (Isa. liii. 12.) Nor was the peculiar position of Jesus on the cross alone the fulfillment of prophecy, it was also a visible manifestation of His re-

deeming work. Sinners, the chief were there, and it was necessary that He should take His place among them. He suffered *among* sinners, and *with* them, and *like* them, and *for* them. This place was given Him that all the ends of the earth might have hope when they look to Him for salvation. The work was finished. The lowest depths of humiliation were reached and passed. Into what depths soever sin had brought men, thither had Immanuel gone in their nature, to bear the doom and set the captive free. Jews and Gentiles, though they knew it not, combined to perfect that which concerned the Saviour's work. The malicious hearts of Jewish priests, and the rude hands of the Roman soldiers, became unconsciously the servants of God, in putting Jesus "in the midst" of sinners, when He gave His life a ransom for them—so, holding forth the very ground of hope, that He might become sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

In the two thieves crucified with Jesus, we see, 1, our common state illustrated. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Whatever difference may exist among men in the development of sin, yet the essential principle of depravity is inherent in the nature of every man, and may be early there discovered by himself to be lively and active in its motions. 2. The proximity to Christ, into which all sinners have been brought. Some are on His right hand, some are on His left. All are sufficiently nigh to receive from Him, if they will, the sense and knowledge of duty, the hopes and fears, the helps and directions which the Gospel affords. 3. The broad line of demarcation which, notwithstanding this identity in points of circumstance, separates men. (See Luke xxiii. 39-43.) While the one of these thieves afforded all the indications of a broken and contrite heart, the other was self-justified and self-sustained. While the one vindicated the innocence of his Saviour, and acknowledged his own demerit, the other united with the multitude in reproach and blasphemy. While the one mortified the pride of his impenitence,

and yielded his heart and mind to the guidance of the Spirit which God had given him, the other, in resistance to the Spirit, braced his impenitence, hazarding every moment the awful issue of eternal death.

39. † And <sup>k</sup>they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. 40. And saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. <sup>k</sup>Ps. xxii. 7, cix. 25; Mark xv. 29; Luke xxiii. 35. <sup>k</sup>Chap. xxvi. 61; John ii. 19. <sup>k</sup>Chap. xxvi. 63.

The impious throng on their way to and from the city, united with the mob in mocking the dying Saviour. This had been predicted by Simeon at Jesus' presentation in the temple (Luke ii. 34), and by Himself to His disciples (Matt. xx. 19; Mark x. 34; Luke xviii. 32.) *Wagging their heads*, shaking their heads by way of derision. (Ps. xxii. 7, lxix. 20.) *Thou that destroyest the temple*, &c. They revive the popular accusation brought against him (Matt. xxvi. 61) by the citizens of Jerusalem, proud of their temple, though the false witnesses upon the trial had contradicted one another; and in challenging our Lord to perform a miracle in proof of His mission, they show the popular expectation that the Messiah, when He came, would work miracles. (See John ii. 19, vii. 31; Matt. iv. 3, 6.) The form which their language assumes, recalls the language addressed to Christ by the tempter. (See on next verse.)

41. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42. He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43. "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. <sup>k</sup>Ps. xxii. 8.

*Chief priests . . . scribes and elders*—they are all there, and they all have their mock. 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.

*He saved others*, &c. They meant that for reproach; it was literal and exact truth. He did save others. The blind, whose eyes He opened; the deaf, whose ears He unstopped; Lazarus, once dead and now living; the raised son of the widow of Nain; men that felt their sins forgiven; chiefest of sinners, who found themselves reinsta-

ted, clustered around him, and acknowledged "He saved not only others, He saved us." The inference, "Himself He cannot save," in the sense in which they used it, was wrong; in its right sense it was perfectly true. Though it appeared to refute His pretensions, it was truly the evidence of His mission. *If he be the king of Israel, &c.* This was ironical, no doubt, and again a wicked conclusion. What malignity and blindness were manifested by them in this hour of their triumph.

*He trusted in God.* This was said with blasphemous reference to Psalm xxii. 7, 8, 9, and in the godless conclusion, blasphemy against Christ passes unconsciously over into blasphemy against God, for whose honor they pretend to be jealous.

*Let him deliver him now, if he will have him.* Carnal man cannot comprehend that God loves those whom He permits to suffer; but faith teaches us that the cross is the gift of His love and the foundation of our hope, the mark of His children and the title of an inheritance in heaven.

*For he said, &c.* (See chap. xxvi. 64.) They may have heard, also, from Judas, that Jesus professed to His disciples to be the Son of God. (See chap. xvi. 16-20.)

44. \*The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

\*Mark xv. 32; Luke xxiii. 39.

*The thieves also.* Not both of them, however, as some commentators unnaturally think we must understand these words, as if some sudden change came over the penitent one, which turned him from an unfeeling railer into a trembling petitioner. The plural "thieves" need not denote more than the *quarter* or *class* whence came this last and cruelest taunt: "Not only did scoffs proceed from the *passers by*, the *ecclesiastics*, the *soldiery*, but even from His *fellow-sufferers*," a mode of speaking which no one would think necessarily meant both of them.

45. \*Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

\*Amos viii. 9; Mark xv. 33; Luke xxiii. 44.

Mark says (xv. 25), "And it was the *third* hour, and they crucified him." The Jews divided their days into twelve hours, beginning to count at sunrise. John says (xix. 14), it was "about the *sixth* hour. The *third* hour was nine

o'clock, the *sixth* hour was twelve o'clock, the *ninth* hour was three o'clock. Evidently Mark describes the commencement of the treatment in the prætorium, which ended in the crucifixion, and John describes the precise moment when Jesus was nailed to the cross. That this must have been the idea of Mark appears from his statement (verse. 33), "And when the *sixth* hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the *ninth* hour" — a statement which John also makes. The concurrence of both the Evangelists as to the time of the supernatural darkness, justifies the reconciliation, already given, of the apparent differences between them.

*Darkness over all the land.* Not the globe, (for it was night at the antipodes), nor, perhaps, was even all Palestine covered, but the vicinity and adjacent country. This darkness must have been supernatural and miraculous. It could not be an eclipse of the sun, because that cannot happen but in the new moon, whereas this was the Feast of the Passover, which was always celebrated at the full moon. It is taken notice of by several ancient writers, both heathen and Christian, and *Tertullian* expressly declares, that it was mentioned in the Roman archives. (Apol. c. 21.)

46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* 47. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, *This man calleth for Elias.* 48. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49. The rest said, *Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.*

\*Heb. v. 7. \*Ps. xxii. 1. \*Ps. lxxix. 21; Mark xv. 36; Luke xxiii. 36; John xix. 29.

*The ninth hour*, that is, three o'clock, or between the evenings, when the passover lamb was slain. *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, &c.* This utterance was not in pure Hebrew, but in the Chaldaic tongue. *My God, my God, &c.* This cry was wrung, as it were, from the sufferer's lips, when the severe agony of His soul had reached its last, its culminating, its closing point. It reveals something of the interior of the burdened heart from which it sprang, but leaves still more unrevealed. After we have listened to it, and pondered it, and turned it over and over again in our thoughts, it seems to grow darker instead



of lighter to our eye, and we become at last convinced that it was the simple, spontaneous, irrepressible outcry of a spirit tried to the last limit of endurance; the expression of what must forever remain to us an indescribable, unfathomable, unimaginable woe.

*Some of them that stood there, &c.* Those that heard Him, deceived by the similitude of the sound, supposed that he meant the proper name Elijah, or, as it should be pronounced, Eliyah; for Elijah is our Anglicising of the word Elijah. *And straightway one of them ran, &c.* This was done when Jesus said, "I thirst" (John xix. 28. See on verses 33, 34.) It was a common opinion among the Jews, that Elijah was personally to appear just before the Messiah, and to assist Him in entering upon His office. They thought that Jesus, in His helplessness, was calling upon Elijah to deliver Him. Therefore, they said, "Let be, &c." This was not spoken to the soldier who was relieving His thirst with the sponge. As appears by Mark, the soldier himself joined in the expression. It means, "wait and let us see if Elijah will come to his rescue." These words plainly show that there was no jest. There was an actual suspense, awakened by the awful darkness, as to whether the Divine interposition would not take place.

50. † Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Mark xv. 37; Luke xxiii. 46.

*Cried again 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. (Luke xxiii. 34, 43; John xix. 26, 27.) The last four concerned Himself. (Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xxvii. 46; John xix. 28, 30.)

*Yielded 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. Mark, Luke and John, though in different Greek words, say much the same as Matthew: "He gave up the ghost." In all the five Old Testament passages which our translators have rendered "giving up the ghost," the Septuagint Greek translators have not used the expressions applied in the Gospels to our Lord's death, nor anything like them. (Gen. lxix. 33; Job x. 18, xi. 20, xiv. 10; Jer. xv. 9.) The Greek expression about Sapphira, which is rendered, "yielded up the ghost" (Acts v. 10), is totally different from those used about our Lord's death.

How large a field of meditation does every one of the last words of Jesus afford us! How much is there in them to be adored and imitated! How many other duties are we obliged to perform toward a God who died for us such a death and by such a love!

51. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, 52. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53. And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Ex. xxvi. 31; 2 Chron. iii. 14; Mark xv. 38; Luke xxiii. 45.

*Rent in twain, &c.* 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.

*The earth did quake, &c.* Earthquakes were common in Palestine, and yet it cannot but be regarded as preternatural, that one should happen in connection with the other wonderful occurrence, just at the time of our Lord's death. The fissures in the solid rocks of Mount Sion, which were rent asunder, are still visible to the eye of the traveler, and are of such a form and size as to attest that they must have been produced in an awful convulsion of nature. It is probable that the hand of time, as well as that of man, has dilapidated the rock in many places, and altered its appearance from what it was when the awe-struck eyes of the beholders looked on the chasm 1800 years ago. But the cleft is still conspicuous over the whole extent of the mountain, about a span wide at its upper part, and two deep, after which it closes, though it again opens below.

*And the graves were opened, &c.* (Isa. xxv. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 55.) In the East it is often the case that tombs are broken up by the violence of earthquakes, but this was now the intended effect. The graves are often excavations in a rock, with a stone placed against them for a door, which the shock throws from its place. *Which slept.* Sleep is sometimes applied to those who have died in the Lord. (1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 Thes. iv. 14; John xi. 11.) *After his resurrection.* These words must be referred to "arose," as well as to "came out of the graves." The graves were opened when the earth quaked and the rocks rent; there was a quickening power felt by the bodies of the saints, but they did not come to full life till Christ was risen. It would appear that these saints were disciples who had died but lately, and were of eminent piety, such as Simeon, Anna and Zachariah, for when they went into the city they were known to be saints by the persons who saw them, which could not well have happened had they not been their contemporaries. Whoever they were, they were not raised to a natural life, terminating again in death, but to eternal life, and must, therefore, be

supposed to have ascended with the Saviour to heaven. Christ was the first fruits from the dead, and there is given us a comfortable assurance, that when He comes in glory, His saints will come with Him; a pledge of which was given at our Lord's resurrection. (1 Thes. iv. 14; Isa. xxvi. 19; John v. 25; 1 Cor. xv. 20; Rev. xx. 4-6.)

54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Verse 36; Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47.

*The centurion*—a captain of a hundred men. He was doubtless the commander of the quaternion of soldiers who watched Jesus' death. *Saw the earthquake, &c.* 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. *They feared greatly.* They regarded what they saw and heard as proof of the Divine indignation against what had been done, and against themselves as the agents of the Jews.

*Saying, truly this was the Son of God.* Mark and Luke represent the centurion alone as speaking. But the soldiers may have caught up the words of the centurion and repeated them, so that Matthew's account does not conflict with that of the other Evangelists. 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 innocency and righteousness given by all sorts of persons.

It is not a little remarkable that the contemplation of the very same scene which so forcibly struck the Roman centurion, has extorted a similar confession from one of the most eloquent of modern skeptics, who has never been accused of too much credulity, and who, though he could bring himself to resist the evidence both of prophecy and of miracles, and was therefore certainly no bigot to Christianity, yet was overwhelmed with the evidence arising from the character, the sufferings, and the death of Jesus. We allude to the celebrated comparison between the

death of Socrates and the death of Jesus, drawn by the masterly pen of *Rousseau*. "Where," says he, "is the man, where is the philosopher, who can act, suffer, and die, without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary just man, covered with all the opprobrium of guilt, yet at the same time meriting the sublimest rewards of virtue, he paints precisely every feature in the character of Jesus Christ. The resemblance is so striking that all the fathers have observed it, and it is impossible to be deceived in it. What prejudice, what blindness must possess the mind of that man who dares to compare the son of Sophroniscus with the Son of Mary! What a distance is there between the one and the other. The death of Socrates philosophising calmly with his friends, is the most gentle that can be wished; that of Jesus expiring in torments, insulted, derided, and reviled by all the people, the most horrible that can be imagined. Socrates, taking the poisoned cup, blesses the man who presents it to him, and who, in the very act of presenting it, melts into tears. Jesus, in the midst of the most agonizing tortures, prays for His enraged persecutors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a GOD."

55. And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: 56. Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.—Luke viii. 2, 3. Mark xv. 40.

*Beholding afar off.* They were, probably, not suffered to come near the cross, because it was surrounded by soldiers. Standing at a distance, as near as they could approach, they witnessed with intense feelings, the convulsions of nature and the crucifixion of Jesus. They stood the ground more firmly than the disciples of Christ. Jesus 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 first to follow Jesus. His grace drew them to Him, His grace detained them. *Which followed Jesus, &c.* (See on Luke viii. 2, 3.) *Mary Magdalene.* (See on Luke viii. 3.) *Mary the mother of James and Joses.* This Mary was

sister to our Lord's mother (John xix. 25), and wife of Cleophas. James is the one called *James the Less* (Mark xv. 40), to distinguish him from James the brother of John. This James and Joses are named, in chap. xiii. 55, as relatives of our Lord. *The mother of Zebedee's children, that is, Salome.* (See Mark xv. 40.) Zebedee's children were James and John. (See Matt. x. 2.) Amid all the voices lifted up against Jesus during His lifetime, there is not one female voice expressing itself in recrimination, insult, or reproach. While men forsook the unparalleled sufferer, women, with a love that did not falter at the worst of times, as it had never wavered in the best, stood near the cross and sympathized, if they could not succor.

57. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: 58. He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

Mark xv. 42; Luke xxiii. 50; John ix. 38.

*Even.* The old word for evening. The latter part of the day preceding the Jewish Sabbath, was devoted, to a greater or less extent, in making preparation in the way of food, fuel, and other necessary things for the wants of the day. It was, therefore, known as the *preparation hour*, an appellation given eventually to the whole of the preceding day. On the present occasion, it was of more than ordinary importance, because the Sabbath fell upon the second day of the feast. *A rich man,* thus fulfilling Is. liii. 9. *Of Arimathea*—this was probably Ramathaim Zophim, lying a few miles east of Jerusalem.

*Who also himself was Jesus' disciple.* 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 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.

*He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.* Joseph probably signified to the soldiers his intention of taking the body of Jesus, and, therefore, as he went directly to Pilate to obtain permission thus to do, they left the body for him to take down. The application of Joseph to Pilate, would have great weight with him. Unless this special application had been made 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. At this critical juncture, God called forth this secret disciple, this friend of Jesus, though unknown as such to the world, and gave him confidence to go in personally to the Roman governor, and ask permission to take down and inter the body. If this be the first instance, it is not the last, that a seemingly dead Christ has awakened a sympathy which a living one had failed to evoke. The heroism of faith is usually kindled by desperate circumstances, and is not seldom displayed by those who before were the most timid, and scarce known as disciples at all. Jesus has friends of whom little is known. There are some quiet, retiring souls on earth, who know the Lord, and the Lord knows them, and yet they are little known by the Church. There are diversities of gifts among Christ's people. There are some who glorify Him passively, and some who glorify Him actively. There are some whose vocation it is to build the Church, and fill a public place, and there are some who only come forward, like Joseph, in times of special need. But each and all are led by one Spirit, and each and all glorify God in their several ways.

*Then Pilate commanded, &c.* It was customary to allow the bodies of deceased criminals to be disposed of by friends, though sometimes wicked rulers exacted money from the friends for the privilege. Joseph's begging the body of Jesus shows that he believed our Lord to be dead. Mark says distinctly (xv. 44), that Pilate only granted the request of Joseph on the express assurance of the centurion that Jesus was dead.

59. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60. And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.—Isai. liii. 9.

*Wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.* Not a shroud, nor a garment, but winding sheets (John xix. 40.) This *sindon* (so called in the Greek from *Sind* or *Indus*, where it was first fabricated) was of fine linen or muslin. It was probably an entire piece at first, and was afterward divided for the purpose of rolling. This idea occurs to us from the object to be attained: the pieces of linen must be wrapped around the limbs in such a way as to enclose the spices, which had been powdered to be employed for embalming. The head was wrapped separately in a napkin of this material. (John xx. 7.)

*And laid it in his own new tomb.* It was a great disgrace among the Jews if any one had not a burying-place of his own, and so it came to be considered an act of charity to bury neglected dead bodies. *Which he had hewn out in the rock.* 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 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.

*He rolled a great stone, &c.* The entrance to sepulchres used to be closed either by stone doors, or by a flat stone placed up against it. This latter act was done to guard the entrance against beasts, or such persons as might be disposed to profane the sepulchre. This circumstance became an important one in Christ's resurrection, for as the tomb had been hewn from a solid rock, and its mouth closed by a huge stone, under charge of a Roman guard, it was impossible for the body to have been removed without the knowledge of the soldiers. The stone was *rolled*, in the sense of working a large stone along, by lifting it up at one end and letting it fall over, so that each time it is passed onward its own length. How wonderful are even

the minutest features of this matchless history of the death and burial of Jesus! A sacred providence watched over His body. Christianity does not contemn the corporeal frame in which the soul resides.

61. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

*The other Mary*—the one mentioned in verse 56. (See Mark xv. 47; Luke xxiii. 55.) *Sitting over against the sepulchre.* This touching feature is recorded by Matthew alone. The women, who, with the attachment of loving sisters, and the courage of heroes, sit in the dusk, in a lonesome garden, over against the sepulchre of Jesus, in silence, and sunk in deep meditation, form the brightest contrast to the crowds of women who, in the Orient, often assemble in bright daylight about the graves, lamenting the dead with unbecoming noise. With Christ they had died to the world; motionless they sat there till late in the evening, and thus lost the time to procure spices with the others, before the Sabbath, for the embalment. But as soon as the Sabbath was over—six o'clock, Saturday evening—they made a purchase by themselves, assisted by Salome. Thus the apparent discrepancy between Mark (xvi. 1) and Luke (xxiii. 56), with regard to the time when the spices were bought, disappears. It may be added, that if the Greek word (Mark xvi. 1) is translated "*bought*," as it ought to be, instead of "*had bought*," as in our version there is not even an apparent discrepancy.

62. † Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63. Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, <sup>a</sup>After three days I will rise again. 64. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

<sup>a</sup>Ps. ii. 1, 3; Acts iv. 27, 28. <sup>b</sup>Chap. xvi. 21, xvii. 23, xx. 19, xxvi. 61; Mark viii. 31, x. 34; Luke ix. 22, xviii. 33; xxiv. 6, 7.

*The next day.* This was the *seventh*, the Jewish Sabbath, our *Saturday*, and might be what we should term the evening of the *sixth* or *Friday*, because the Jews always ended their day when the sun set, and then began the next. *The day of the preparation.* The victuals, &c. which were to be used on the Sabbath by the Jews, were always *prepared* the preceding evening before the sun set. It is of this *preparation* that the Evangelist speaks

here, and it is the same which is mentioned by Mark, xv. 42, Luke, xxiii. 54, and John, xix. 31. The chief priests and Pharisees had a guard therefore as soon as they possibly could after the body of Christ was deposited in the sepulchre, and one cannot help admiring the wisdom of Providence in so disposing events, that the extreme anxiety of these men, to prevent collusion, should be the means of adding the testimony of sixty unexceptionable witnesses (the number of the Roman soldiers on guard) to the truth of the resurrection, on which everything depended, and of establishing the reality of it beyond all power of contradiction. *And Pharisees.* They had taken no part in the actual trial (chap. xxvi. 3, 57), yet had not been altogether inactive (John xviii. 3.) Perhaps there were also Pharisees among the scribes and elders. Perhaps the Pharisees, from extreme zeal, did much that was not exactly their office. *Sir*, literally, *Lord*. They cringe to Pilate. They had not so addressed him before.

*That deceiver.* The chiefs of the people seem never to have called Jesus by His name. One of the charges against Him was, that He deceived the people. By this title they still chose to designate Him, thinking that His death had fully confirmed the truth of the charges against Him. "Even in death and after death to be called a 'deceiver,' as if no other description could express Thee! Thy humiliation, and wounds, and shame, are not yet over or exhausted, but flow on still even beyond the grave, to the healing of our sick souls, and the strengthening of our weak faith, teaching us that not even in death are we to seek for a good name for ourselves, but that when reviled we shall have Thy shame to cover us."

*After three days, &c.* Jesus had never said this in their hearing, on any recorded occasion. But they say, *we remember.* Had they then obtained the statement from Judas, or from some other of the Twelve? Or did they so well understand "the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. xii. 39, 40) as to venture thus boldly to interpret it? Probably they took this from our Lord's saying concerning "this temple." (John ii. 19). If so, they destroyed, by their

own words, the false accusation they brought against Him to put Him to death. *Then they perverted the meaning, now they declare it.* Thus the wise are taken in their own craftiness. Neither the devil nor his servants ever speak truth, but when they expect to accomplish some bad purpose by it. *Be made sure*—with guards, seals, &c. *Until the third day.* This is a commentary on the expression, “within three days,” showing that the third day is meant, and not three full days of 24 hours each. *Lest, i. e.,* lest perhaps.

*Steal him away, i. e.,* remove His body by stealth from the tomb. *Say unto the people, &c.* The Pharisees did not apprehend that *they* would believe it. They will take care (as they persuade themselves) for the people. *So the last error*—namely, the triumph of the disciples of Christ in creating a faith in the resurrection. *The first*—the temporary faith produced by Christ’s miracles and preaching in the popular mind that He was the Messiah. The Jews talk as if a previous error or mismanagement had allowed Jesus a temporary triumph while living; they fear that a worse oversight may give a permanent triumph to His cause after His death. How much worse has proved that *error*, and how much greater the triumph, than they could have imagined!

65. Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

*Ye have a watch.* This alludes to the guard of Roman soldiers which was at this time allowed the Jewish rulers, for the purpose of quelling tumults and preserving the public peace. We learn from *Josephus* that the tower of Antonia, which overlooked the temple, was always garrisoned by a legion of Roman soldiers, and that, on the side where it joined to the porticos of the temple, there were *stairs* reaching to each portico, by which a company, band or detachment, descended and kept guard in these porticos, to prevent any tumults at the great festivals. It was a detachment of these soldiers that Pilate gave the Jews leave to employ to watch the tomb. *Make it as sure as ye can*—not “if that is possible,” but, “as ye understand that,” according to your meaning of securing. Though there may be no irony in this

speech, it evidently insinuated that if the event should be contrary to their wish, it would not be for want of sufficient human appliances to prevent it. Pilate, though he had placed the guard at their disposal, yet left the employment of the men, the guardianship or guarantee for Christ’s continuance in death, which they wished him also to undertake, to themselves. In this instance, again, he kept not his conscience pure, and preserved not his civil power unimpaired—giving a guard because of a religious question.

66. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.—Dan. vi. 17.

*Sealing the stone.* Probably a rope was passed over it in such a way, that the two ends meeting upon it were fastened, and some public seal—either Pilate’s signet, or the public seal of the Sanhedrim—was attached to them. No one, then, could pass into the sepulchre without resisting the public authority. *Setting a watch,* literally, *with a watch, i. e.,* they sealed the stone, at the same time that they set the guard. The guard was to prevent the duplicity of the disciples, the seal was to secure against the collusion of the guard. (See Dan. vi. 7.) What more could man do? But while they are trying to prevent the resurrection of the Prince of Life, God makes use of their precautions for His own ends. Their stone-covered, seal-secured sepulchre shall preserve the sleeping body of the Son of God free from all indignities, in undisturbed, sublime repose; while their watch shall be His guard of honor until the angels shall come to take their place.

“How contemptible,” says *Lange*, “are the means by which the modern Pharisees and scribes attempt, like those of old, to shut up the life and spirit of Christ in the grave! Antiquated seals of office and guards of soldiers obtained by begging! Mental blindness goes hand in hand with the malice of the heart.” *Lisco* remarks: “What a great resemblance do the enemies of Christ in our days bear to those Jewish priests! 1. They pretend to be fully satisfied of the worthlessness and insignificance of the Spirit indwelling in the Church. 2. Nevertheless, they are in constant dread that it will break out again, even when

they look upon it as suppressed. 3. All their measures to prevent the spread of the Gospel prove as ineffectual as did the sealing of the grave of Jesus. What did the murderers of Jesus gain by stationing a heathen guard and sealing the tomb of

Jesus? They only became the instruments in the hands of Divine Providence, to place the resurrection of Christ beyond all reasonable doubt. Thus must all the assaults on the cause of Christ at last serve the furtherance of the Gospel."

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1. To what governor was Jesus led away? 2. What is said of Judas? 3. What did the chief priests do with the thirty pieces of silver he brought to them? 4. What did the governor ask Jesus? 5. Did Christ answer his question? 6. What did Pilate do in reference to Barabbas and Jesus? 7. What did his wife say to him? 8. What dreadful imprecation did all the people utter? 9. What did the soldiers do to Jesus? 10. Who bore His cross? 11. What was given Christ to drink? 12. What was done with His garments? 13. What was said to Jesus as He hung on the cross? 14. When He "cried with a loud voice," what did He say? 15. What occurred when Christ yielded up the Ghost? 16. Who asked His body for burial? 17. Why was it requested "that the sepulchre be made sure?"

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

<sup>1</sup> *Christ's resurrection is declared by an angel to the women.* <sup>9</sup> *He himself appeareth unto them.* <sup>11</sup> *The high priests give the soldiers money to say that he was stolen out of his sepulchre.* <sup>16</sup> *Christ appeareth to his disciples,* <sup>19</sup> *and sendeth them to baptize and teach all nations.*

**I**N the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene<sup>a</sup> and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. <sup>a</sup>Mark xvi. 1; Luke xxiv. 1; John xx. 1. <sup>b</sup>Chap. xxvii. 56.

*In the end of the Sabbath* denotes at the close of Saturday, the Sabbath of the Jews. 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.

*As it began to dawn, &c.* Mark says: "Very early. . . . . at the rising of the sun." (xvi. 2.) Luke: "Very early in the morning." (xxiv. 1.) John: "When it was yet dark." (xx. 1.) The visit of the women to the sepulchre may have covered hours, extending from the first start from home until they left the sepulchre. Suppose they started at four o'clock, and after the company gathered proceeded on their way. By some unknown means (perhaps the delay in the opening of the

city gates), they may not have arrived until "the rising of the sun"—a phrase which, as can be easily shown, may indicate not merely the time when the sun has visibly risen above the horizon, but the time when he is sensibly about rising to it.

*Came Mary Magdalene, &c.* (See on xxvii. 61.) From Mark (xvi. 1) we learn that Salome, the mother of Zebedee's sons, was with them. *To see the sepulchre.* It appears from the other Evangelists that in company with other women, they came to anoint the body with the spices and ointments which they had prepared previous to the Sabbath (Luke xxiii. 56), and also, in part, after the Sabbath was ended. (Mark xvi. 1. See on chap. xxvii. 61.) Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, had, indeed, embalmed the body of Jesus, but as this must necessarily have been hastily and imperfectly executed, these women came with the intention of disposing the body in a more orderly manner for its final rest.

We here perceive what little hope there was of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, for we see that not one of His disciples even expected it. If they had had any expectation of the event, they would have seized upon the smallest indication of it, and have founded their conclusion

upon very slight grounds, but the difficulty was to persuade them that Christ had risen, and they needed nothing short of their own sense of His actual, personal presence, to convince them that He whom they saw crucified and laid in a sepulchre hewn from the rock, had now risen from the dead, had become the first fruits of them that slept. The early visit of these holy women to the sepulchre—which they evidently never dreamed would be found empty, and Christ gone—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,  
Last 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.

2. And behold, there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.—See Mark xvi. 3; Luke xxiv. 4; John xx. 12.

As the women went, it occurred to them that they should find an insuperable difficulty in the removal of the great stone that closed the sepulchre. (Mark xvi. 3.) How glad would they have been of the help of all the eleven Apostles. But greater help than theirs was afforded. 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. *There was a great earthquake*—the proper translation is, “ There had been a great earthquake—previous to the visit of the women. *The angel of the Lord descended, &c.* They observed with amazement that the stone had already been removed, and that the mouth of the sepulchre stood open. *Rolled back the stone from the door.* The stone was lying in the hollow, cut deep into the rock, so as to form the door “ It was very great ” (Mark xvi. 4), and must accordingly be rolled forth from this recess outward.

*And sat upon it*—upon the conquered thing as upon a triumphant throne. Luke speaks of two angels, and represents them as standing (xxiv. 4), while Matthew

and Mark speak of only one, who was sitting. (Mark xvi. 5.) The apparent discrepancy may be reconciled by either of the following methods. Matthew and Mark speak of the one who acted as spokesman, not denying, however, that there were two, but Luke, not making that distinction between the one who spoke and the one who kept silence, represents two as being present, and speaking. As to their position, the word in Luke translated *stood* has reference to a *sudden appearance*, or, *being suddenly present*, and not at all to the posture or position of the one who makes his appearance. Or thus—The angel who sat upon the stone to appal and stupefy the guards, had entered the sepulchre as the women drew nigh, doubtless to prevent their being deterred from approaching. The women entered the sepulchre and *there* (as is implied in Matt. xxviii. 6), the words of the angel were uttered to them. On their first entrance they saw but one angel, and he sitting, at which they were terrified. A moment after, as Luke adds, two angels *stood* before them (the one being joined by a second, to confirm the truth by two witnesses), so that the words were uttered standing, the first angel, doubtless, having risen and being speaker for both.

3. <sup>4</sup>His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow : 4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.—Dan. x. 6.

*His countenance was like lightning*, that is, of an unearthly and intolerable splendor. *And his raiment, &c.* Mark says (xvi. 5), “ they saw a young man,” *i. e.*, a man in form but an angel in nature. It would seem that angelic beings can assume different forms, and invest themselves with apparent habiliments, and present or withdraw themselves from sight as they please. So our Lord in His resurrection body could make Himself more or less known, as He chose, to His disciples. The raiment was 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). *White*, among the Jews, was a symbol of purity and innocence. 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 keepers did shake, &c.* The guard appointed to the tomb became paralyzed as dead men. God can, by one and the same means, *comfort* His servants, and *terrify* His enemies. The resurrection of Christ is a subject of *terror* to the servants of sin, and a subject of consolation to the sons of God, because it is a proof of the resurrection of both—the one to shame and everlasting contempt, the other to eternal glory.

5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.  
Chap. xii. 40, xvi. 21, xvii. 23 and xx. 19.

At first these pious visitants were afraid. And what wonder, when we consider that they were females—that all their sensibilities were alive—that they were in the garden of another—that they were alone—that the guards were paralyzed with fear—that it was early in the morning, and the remaining darkness rendered more visible and awful the Divine messenger, in whose presence they stood—his countenance as lightning, and his raiment white as snow! But, says the angel, "*You* have nothing to apprehend from *me*. He is my Master as well as your Saviour. I serve Him whom ye seek, and having attended His resurrection, I now announce it to you. He is not here. He is risen, as He said. Step forward—come see the place where the Lord lay." (See Matt. xii. 40, xvi. 21, xvii. 23.)

Do we feel our need of Christ as once we did not, for all the purposes of salvation? Have we desires after Him—so peculiar that nothing else can satisfy them—so powerful as to make us part with whatever stands in competition with Him? Are we determined to press through all difficulties? Are we found in the use of all the means which He has appointed? Are we submissively asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? depending on the aid of His Holy Spirit, and looking for His mercy unto eternal life? If we can answer these questions in the affirmative, we are entitled to the assurance, *I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.* And we have nothing to *fear*. We need not fear that we have a graceless heart—the

very seeking is a token for good. We need not fear that our search will be unsuccessful, for the aim of Christ in making us sensible of our condition, is not to render us miserable, but to endear Himself, and to draw forth our souls after Him. We shall not be disappointed.

From the vacant sepulchre of Christ we learn, 1. That a stronger than death has invaded the tomb. The spoiler is now spoiled; Death himself is buried, and his dominion gone forever. 2. That Jesus was made sin for His people. Death is not a debt of nature, but the penalty of transgression. As Jesus died, sin must have been His in some way, or how came He to suffer its penalty? The Apostle tells us: "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 3. That Jesus put away the sins of His people. Sin being imputed to Jesus, death must hold Him its prisoner forever, unless He put it away by the endurance of its penalty. The vacant grave proclaims the penalty *was* endured, and the transgression of His people forever removed. 4. That His work was accepted. Jesus came to magnify the law, and make it honorable, and to ratify, with His own blood, the covenant made between the Eternal Three, which covenant hath for its object the salvation of His people. He did so; the ratification was complete; justice placed her hand upon the crimson bond, and declared herself satisfied; the Father looked and smiled, and welcomed back the Son. 5. That His people shall live. The law cannot give life, but a living Saviour can. "Because I live ye shall live also."

7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples, that he is risen from the dead, and behold, the goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you.—Chap. xxvi. 32; Mark xvi. 7.

*Go quickly, &c.* Do not tarry, do not take the good news as a monopoly. Spread the good news that He has risen from the dead. Engage in active duty, carry the glad tidings to His disciples "and Peter." (Mark xvi. 7.) What an exquisitely beautiful touch is that! We read in the account of Peter's denial, of Jesus looking upon Peter, and of Peter thinking thereon, and going out and weeping bitterly. How beautiful, that Jesus

should send the first glad tidings of His resurrection to His disciples, and that He should request these women specially to single out Peter, because his heart was sorrowful and cast down under a sense of his sin, and to carry him the consolation which such tidings would give. *He goeth before you into Galilee*—to which those women belonged. This must refer to those more public manifestations of Himself to large numbers of disciples at once, which He vouchsafed only in Galilee, for individually He was seen of some of these very women almost immediately after this. (Verses 9, 10). *Lo, I have told you*. Behold, ye have this word from the world of light.

8. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word.

*Fear and joy*. What a strange mixture! Their joy was *greater* than their fear. They trembled because they had seen angels; they rejoiced because they hoped soon to see their Lord. The *fear* was the consequence of human infirmity; the joy flowed from faith and love. There are many fears now in the hearts of believers, but they shall all pass away, whereas their joy shall increase and endure forever. When they have no sin, they shall have no fear, and when they see Jesus, their joy shall be full. *Did run*, &c. Through fear, they did not say anything to any man by the way. (Mark xvi. 8.) Thus these faithful women proclaim the Gospel to those who were, afterward, to be the *teachers* of the whole human race! Behold what honor God puts upon those who persevere in His truth, and continue to acknowledge Him before men!

9. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

See Mark xvi. 9; John xx. 14.

*And as they went*, that is, the other women, Mary Magdalene not being with them, for Mark says (xvi. 9), Jesus appeared *first* to Mary Magdalene. It is probable from the statement of John, in his twentieth chapter, that Mary Magdalene, having left the ground before the other women, met with Peter and John, who, after hearing from her, came off without delay to the tomb, and found it empty, and then returned from the tomb. Mary Magdalene arrived later than they, and then Jesus appeared

to her. Shortly after this, Jesus appeared to the other women who were going, by direction of the angel, to inform the disciples. *Jesus met them*. Christ bestows His graces and consolations by *degrees*—first by His angels, and then by Himself. He does not reveal Himself to incredulous and disobedient souls. He appears not even to those women till He has tried their faith and obedience by His ministering angels. *All hail*—the usual salute, but from the lips of Jesus, bearing a higher signification.

*And they came and held him*, &c. Jesus allowed them to approach and embrace His feet in testimony of their joy and homage. The granting of this privilege is not inconsistent with Christ's prohibition to Mary Magdalene: "Touch me not." (John xx. 17.) In that case, Mary, in the immediate outpouring of her love, seemed to want to hold Him fast (the Greek tense expressing action continued), lest the wonderful appearance should vanish again, and in doing so she betrayed that she did not at the time realize the higher relation in which her risen Lord now stood to her. She wanted to enjoy His communion in a human manner, as she had been wont during His earthly life. From this tone of mind Christ leads her away by giving her to understand that she must no longer reckon upon any such intercourse with Him as she had hitherto enjoyed, that His tarrying on earth was only transitory, and that the time of exalted and Divine relationships had ceased. The act of the women which Matthew records is entirely different. They at once recognize Him with holy awe, not merely as their Teacher, but as their risen Lord, and instinctively pay Him adoration.

10. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.—John xx. 17; Rom. viii. 29; Heb. ii. 11.

*Be not afraid*. Jesus, with gentle words, quieted their first alarm. What dear associations would these familiar words—now uttered in a higher style, but by the same lips—bring rushing back to their recollection! *Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me*. The brethren here must have been His brethren after the flesh (chap. xiii. 55); for His

brethren in the higher sense (John xx. 17), had several meetings with Him at Jerusalem before He went to Galilee, which they would have missed if they had been the persons ordered to Galilee to meet Him. (See on verse 7.)

The several appearances which Jesus made after His resurrection to various persons, and at different times, are as follows:

The first was to Mary Magdalene alone. (Mark xvi. 9.)

The second, to her in company with several other women. (Matt. xxviii. 9.)

The third to Peter. (1 Cor. xv. 5.)

The fourth, to the two disciples going to Emmaus. (Luke xxiv. 13.)

The fifth, to the Apostles in Jerusalem, when they were assembled with the doors shut, on the first day of the week; at which time He showed them His hands and His feet, pierced with the nails, and did eat before them. (John xx. 19; Luke xxiv. 37-43.)

The sixth, to the Apostles a second time, as they sat at meat, when He satisfied the doubts of the incredulous Thomas, by making him thrust his hand into His side. (John xx. 26.)

The seventh, to Peter and several of His disciples, at the lake of Tiberias, when He also ate with them. (John xxi. 1.)

The eighth, and last, was to above five hundred brethren at once. (1 Cor. xv. 6.)

There are then no less than eight distinct appearances of our Lord to His disciples after his resurrection, recorded by the sacred historians. And can we believe that all those different persons could be deceived in these appearances of one, whose countenance, figure, voice, and manner, they had for so long a time been perfectly well acquainted with; and who now, not merely presented Himself to their view transiently and silently, but ate and drank and conversed with them, and suffered them to touch and examine Him thoroughly, that they might be convinced by all their senses that it was truly their beloved Master, and not a spirit, that conversed with them.

11. † Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13. Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14. And if this come to the Governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

When they were going, some of the watch, &c. It seems that what induced the guard to take this step was the visit of the women. The soldiers had ascertained that Jesus was departed, whose sepulchre they had been set to watch. They had already seen His female followers make their appearance at "the place where the Lord lay," indeed, the women were even now running toward Jerusalem with the news that Christ had risen from the dead. It was manifest that no time was to be lost; accordingly, while the women were going, some of the guard hastened into the city, to bring thither the unwelcome tidings of what had so recently occurred. Probably the rest of the guards still remained at the tomb, waiting for orders to depart, and had sent these to intimate to their employers the things that had taken place. *Chief priests, i. e.,* Annas and Caiaphas, under whose immediate authority they had acted (see xxvii. 65), and to whom, therefore, they were to make their report. *All the things that were done.* How great must have been the consternation of these men to find that after all the matter was not to die with the crucifixion, and that "the last error," which they had feared as "worse than the first," had truly taken place.

And when they were assembled, &c. As the report filled them with amazement, and as there seemed to be no way of evading the truth of this marvelous event, they had no resource left but to convene the Sanhedrim, and refer the matter to their united wisdom and counsel. *Large money,* a large sum of money. It must have been a very tempting bribe, to induce a Roman guard to confess so capital a delinquency as sleeping on their post. If, as was promised, the chief priests and rulers succeeded in persuading Pilate to pardon them, they would yet be disgraced forever in the estimation of their comrades.

Say ye, His disciples, &c. The very event which the high priests had rendered impossible by setting a guard, they were obliged to bribe the soldiers to declare had actually taken place. (See chap. xxvii. 53.) And why? Because they had

to do with Him who "taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (Job v. 13), and by whose Spirit it had been said prophetically, "They have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. (Ps. lvii. 6.)

*Came by night, and stole him away, &c.* How utterly absurd such an allegation! For, first, there was a great festival of the Jews; it was bright moonlight, and at that great festival, as the houses of Jerusalem were unable to contain all the visitors who came from a distance to be present, hundreds of thousands were bivouacked upon the streets, living in tents, or wandering about all night unable to find a lodging. In the next place a watch of Roman soldiers was the most exclusive guarantee that no one should prevail to interfere successfully with their charge, except at the sacrifice of their own lives. A Roman soldier was punished with death if he slept on his watch. He would have been punished with death if he had allowed any one to interfere with his charge, whom he could prevent. And, therefore, for the soldiers to come and say that to the scribes and Pharisees, and thus to impute to themselves the highest crime of which a soldier could be guilty, was absurd in itself, and not fitted to make an impression in favor of what they asserted upon any dispassionate and unprejudiced mind. For, first, how could the eleven fishermen of Galilee roll away a gigantic stone from a sepulchre in bright moonlight, in the midst of a watch of twenty-five or thirty Roman soldiers, and then take out the dead body, and exhibit so little haste that the napkin was rolled up and laid neatly aside in the sepulchre, and then carry that dead body along the streets of Jerusalem, lined with thousands who could not get accommodation in the city, and so secrete that dead body, that the most vigilant inspection of all the soldiers and police of Jerusalem should fail to detect it? Is this probable? And again, how could it have happened that all the soldiers slept precisely at the same moment, and that the disciples opened the sepulchre without disturbing the slumbers of a single soldier, and that they carried away the body and left not the least trace of haste

or precipitation behind them? The story manifestly carries its own refutation, and proves nothing against the solemn declaration of the disciples, that their Master was raised by the power of God.

*And if this come to the governor's ears, &c.* When this rumor shall reach the governor, be repeated unto him for judicial investigation, and the danger becomes imminent. This was undoubtedly an excuse highly dangerous for the soldiers (see Acts xii. 19), and the high priests could by no means be sure of the result, although they might be ready to give Pilate a large bribe. The hierarchical spirit, which here reaches its climax, uses the Roman soldiers merely as tools to effect its own ends, as it had previously employed Judas, and was again fully prepared to let the despised instruments perish, when the work was finished. *So they took the money.* Avarice had more power over them than fear. *And this saying is commonly reported, &c.*—to the date of the publication of this Gospel. The wonder is that so clumsy and incredible a story lasted so long. But those who are resolved *not* to come to the light will catch at straws. *Justin Martyr*, who flourished about A. D. 170, says, in his "Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew," that the Jews dispersed the story by means of special messengers sent to every country.

16. ¶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them. <sup>1</sup>Chap. xxvi. 32; verse 7.

*The eleven.* One alone, the "son of perdition," is not among them. He has fallen like a star from heaven, and left his place vacant. The eleven are referred to by way of pre-eminence, although there can be no doubt that the pious women, who had attended Jesus so faithfully through all His trials and sufferings, and others also of the brethren, including Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, accompanied them.

*Into Galilee*—into which the disciples of Jesus had, immediately after His resurrection, been directed to follow Him. (Mark xvi. 7. See also on Matt. xxviii. 7, 10.) *Into a mountain*—probably the mountain on which He had been transfigured, in coming down from which He had spoken of His resurrection from the dead. (Matt.

xvii. 9.) And also before the transfiguration (Matt. xvi. 21), and after it (Matt. xvii. 23.) They seem to have lingered by the sea of Galilee, before reaching the mountain where they were to meet their Lord. (John xxi. 1-22.) *Had appointed them* (Matt. xxvi. 32; Mark xiv. 28). We have every reason to believe that this was the same memorable convocation to which Paul refers. (1 Cor. xv. 6.)

17. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

The faith in the Divinity of Christ that existed during the time of His sojourn on earth, as it were only as a spark in the breasts of His disciples, was kindled into a blazing flame by the sight of the risen Saviour. *But some doubted.* "We cannot," says *Stier*, "believe that any of the eleven Apostles should have doubted, especially after all that had taken place according to Luke and John. Matthew gives us in this circumstance an intimation that many others were present with the eleven. But *what did they doubt?* We say with *Ebrard*, 'not whether Christ was risen, but whether the person they saw was Christ.' For although they had followed the summons to the mountain, and had been in the company of the Apostles and brethren who had already seen the Lord, they might, when they themselves saw Him first, especially if standing at a distance, distrust their eyes in astonishment, or fail to believe at once, simply through wonder and joy." (See 1 Cor. xv. 6.) There can be no question, however, that at the close of this interview, every one present recognized and identified Jesus who had risen from the dead.

18. † And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, † All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

† Dan. vii. 13, 14; chap. xi. 27 and xvi. 28; Luke i. 52 and x. 22; John iii. 35, v. 22, xiii. 3 and xvii. 2; Acts ii. 36; Rom. xiv. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 10, 21; Phil. ii. 9, 10; Heb. i. 2 and ii. 3; 1 Peter iii. 22; Rev. xvii. 14.

*And Jesus came and spake.* And as He came and spake in the fullness of His power, all shadow of doubt disappeared from every mind. The *three* recorded assertions of our Lord (verses 18-20), consist of, 1. A parting assurance; 2. A parting commission, and, 3. A parting promise. *All power is given unto me.* The word "power" in our language is *ambiguous*; that is, it may be employed with

different significations. Sometimes it signifies *ability* or *capacity*, and sometimes, also, *rightful authority*. The term is in many passages used in these various ways. (See 1 Cor. xv. 24.) In both these senses it is true of Christ. He has at once the ability to act and the authority to warrant His acting. It is, however, in the latter of these significations the word is here employed. It signifies *rightful authority*. But it must be remembered that God would never commit all authority into the hands of one who had not *ability* and *capacity* rightly to exercise it. Christ, as a Divine person, has all power *inherent in Himself*. He is God, equal with the Father. The same titles and attributes are ascribed to both. "I," says He, "and my Father are one"—one in substance, one in will, one in operation. This is manifest from the mighty works which Jesus performed in virtue of His essential as well as delegated authority. The Apostles wrought miracles in the Saviour's name, but Christ did so in His own name. He thus bears the names, claims the honors, and exercises the prerogatives of Deity. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (See Eph. i. 20, 21; Acts ii. 14, 36; Phil. ii. 8.)

19. † Go ye therefore and † teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20. † Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

† Mark xvi. 15. † Isa. lii. 10; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts ii. 38, 39; Rom. x. 13; Col. i. 23. † Acts ii. 42.

*Go ye, &c.* The Apostles had received from the Lord the richest blessings. They had been great receivers of grace, they were, therefore, to be munificent givers. They had been saved themselves freely by His grace; He asks them to go forth and prove themselves active benefactors to all the rest of mankind. No man receives a blessing to be absorbed in himself. God sanctions no monopoly in religion. All we have, we have as stewards, and what we have we are commanded largely and liberally to devote to the glory of God and to the good of all over whom we have any influence. No man liveth unto himself; every man, by being a Christian, becomes necessarily and everywhere a missionary.

It must have been very painful to the

Apostles to leave their homes, their country and their kindred, and to go forth into the wide, wide world, where they must experience all sorts of opposition, and expect rest only in the grave, or rather in the presence of Him that sent them. They had, in those days, no such facilities as we have. The modern missionary has not the difficulties in his way that these ancient ones had. The paddle-wheel had not made traveling easy, as it is now; the iron rails, stretching like a net-work over all the earth, had not made communication so rapid. They went forth upon the rough road many a long and arduous journey, knowing only that bonds and imprisonment awaited them, but caring for nothing except that they should be free from the blood of all men, and fulfil their solemn commission—*Go . . . . . teach all nations, &c.* It is only to those who are called by God and qualified for His service, that this commission is given. It was the disciples of Christ that were here addressed, and it is only so far as ministers are connected with Him and commissioned by Him, that they are to be obeyed. *Therefore*, that is, *because* all power is given unto me. Being, as I am now, the fountain of all authority, crowned, as I now am, with a rightful dominion, go forth and win the world to a willing subjection by grace. It was as if the first use Jesus would make of His mediatorial rule and sovereignty was to break down the barriers that had so long separated race from race, and make the waters of salvation roll round the globe, and, like its own oceans, touch every shore.

*Teach*, literally *disciple*, or train into discipleship. Not *subdue*, *subjugate*, as the consequence of His unlimited power, but “bring men to the knowledge of the truth—work on and in their hearts, and lift them up to be partakers of the Divine nature.”

*All nations.* The Gospel is to be preached to “all the world”—to every creature. (Mark xvi. 15.) Its calls and invitations are free, unfettered, and unlimited. The language in which they uniformly run, is this, “To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.” “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth;

for I am God, and there is none else.” All adventitious circumstances are disregarded. The shivering Icelander and the sunburnt Moor are included in the call. With Christ Jesus both Greek and Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, male and female, are all one, and He is not ashamed to call them brethren. The rich man in gay clothing, and the poor man in vile raiment, are on the same level. Lazarus in his rags, and in his sores, is equally well pleasing with Solomon on the throne in all his glory. Wherever we find a human being, beneath whatever load of woe he may be bending, we may invite him to the Saviour that he may obtain sympathy and relief. He was manifested to take away sin—His blood cleanseth from all sin—and He taketh away the sin of the world. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” “Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

*Baptizing them*—as an initiatory rite. *In the name.* A literal and better translation would be, *into the name*, which denotes something more than *in* or *by* the authority of the Triune God. The name is *one*, not *names*. The persons, or subsistences, *three*, each of whom is manifestly represented as co-equal, because the common objects of trust, obedience, and worship, and the source of blessing. Thus is the absolute unity and Divine character of that Sacred Three unequivocally marked. *Of the Father, &c.* The three who had borne witness at Jesus’ baptism (chap. iii. 15); the Son presenting Himself as being willing to fulfill all righteousness (verse 15); the Spirit descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him (verse 16); and the Father’s voice being heard from heaven (verse 17.) (See on chap. iii. 16, 17.)

*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*, that is, during His previous instructions, both before and after His crucifixion. The duty of Christian ministers as here declared is *two-fold*. They are to *preach the word*, or declare the whole counsel of God. And they are to *administer the Sacraments* of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, regulating their conduct in both

matters according to the pattern shown in the mount of God's holy word. How comprehensive is the commission which the ministers of religion thus receive. They must state from the Scriptures the truth of the Divine existence, and the perfections and attributes which are essential to it—they must point out the exercise of these perfections in the works of redemption and providence, and especially in the work of redemption—they must declare the unity of the Deity as subsisting in a trinity of persons to whom the same splendid titles are applied, and by whom the same mighty operations are performed—and they must exhibit, as the grand centre of attraction and foundation of our hope, that salvation which Christ accomplished on the cross, when He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. The Gospel is a system of mercy to the guilty, of holiness for the impure, and of comfort and consolation under all the afflictions of life. It comprehends our duty to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves. It embraces practice as well as faith—duty as well as privilege. It is no new law, as some persons foolishly imagine. The terms of salvation are no easier now than under the former dispensation—the standard of morality is not lowered—the wrath of God is still revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men—and the Saviour Himself assures us that it is vain we call Him Lord, Lord, if we do not the things which He requires. The faithful servant of God, then, must keep nothing back that is profitable to the hearers. He must teach publicly and from house to house—he must preach the preaching that God shall bid him—and, taking his stand in the courts of the Lord's house, he must speak unto all the people that come to worship in the Lord's house all the words that He has commanded him to speak unto them; and, while life and vigor last, he must not diminish a word.

*And, lo, I am with you alway.* There is, says an eminent author, a beautiful connection and contrast between the first and the last assertions of this farewell discourse. The assertion by Jesus of His unlimited sovereign dominion was a cheering and gladdening one. It was the

announcement that the garnered riches of the universe were in His possession, and that all these would be used in behalf of His people. He seems in it to take the *telescope* and sweep the boundless firmament of His power, proclaiming His kingdom to be an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion enduring throughout all generations. But now is the telescope laid aside, and the *microscope* is turned to every atom of redeemed dust! He leaves the symbols of His might in the heavens above, His regal sway over "thrones, dominions, principalities, powers," and turning to each one individual member of His Church on earth, the feeblest, the poorest, the lowliest, the most desolate, He says, *Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!* The splendors of His mediatorial throne were at that moment in view. The harps of heaven were sounding in His ear. But He assures them, when standing on the very threshold of all this glory, that His heart of love would still continue with the pilgrim Church He was to leave in a pilgrim world. "*All power is given to me in heaven;*" YET, "*Lo, I am with you.*" That farewell saying has lost none of its comfort. "You." That little word embraced every one of *us!* You—Jesus looked down the vista of eighteen centuries, His eye, perhaps, was on some lone spirit now reading these pages, who thinks he has been left to the mercy of the storm, and still He says, "O thou of little faith, wherefore art thou cast down? dry thy tears, dispel thy misgivings," "*Lo! I am with you!*" Yes! Blessed assurance amid much that is changing here! Heart and flesh do faint and fail! Often our cisterns are scarcely filled when they break in pieces; our suns have scarce climbed the meridian when they set in weeping clouds; our fondest schemes are blown upon; our most cherished gourds withered. We seat ourselves in our homes, but there are blanks there; vacant seats tell the too truthful tale of severed links, and blighted hopes, and early graves. As age creeps on, we look around us, but the companions of our pilgrimage are gone; noble forest trees, one by one, have bowed to the axe, "the place that once knew them knows

them no more." But there is ONE surviving the wreck and ruin of all sublunary joys, changeless among the changeable—"Lo! I am with you"—and "the wilderness and the solitary place" are by that presence made "glad." *Unto the end of the world*—while the world shall stand. (Comp. chap. xiii. 39, 40.) It is here testified that a last day will come. The language shows that Jesus meant this injunction for all who should succeed the Apostles in making known the Gospel. So long as the Gospel is unknown in any part of the world, it is the duty of the ministers and followers of Jesus to labor for its extension. (See Mark xvi. 15, 16.) Jesus will be with His ministers and people wherever they may meet together in His name. When He assumed humanity, arrayed Himself in the dust of our globe, He took a first-fruits of it, and consecrated the whole. Every place, therefore, is suitable for spiritual worship, and where-soever, therefore—in church, in chapel, on the sea-shore, on the hill-side, on the

deck—believers pray in the name of the believer's Lord, there He has promised to be with them, even to the end of the world.

*Always*—literally "always." Jesus will be with His ministering servants and believing people at all times, by night, by day, in sunshine and under cloud, in sickness and in health, when their success seems very little, and when it is of the most encouraging description. He will be with them to direct, sustain, comfort, bless. No words could teach more distinctly than these that the Lord goes with His servants to the extreme limits of the world. (See 2 Cor. xi. 28; Luke ix. 23; Ps. xxiii. 4.) Christians are encouraged to do in the strength of Christ all that by His authority they are commanded. His sympathy is ever with His followers on earth. His wisdom is able to direct, and His power to uphold them. He is ever with us, even until we "shall ever be with the Lord." There He, who now is really present with us, will be also visibly. AMEN.

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1. Explain "the end of the Sabbath." 2. Who then came to the sepulchre? 3. Who rolled the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4. What else is said of the angel? 5. What did the women do under the direction of the angel? 6. Who met them as they went to the disciples? 7. What did Jesus say to them? 8. What were the soldiers bribed to say? 9. What did the eleven disciples do? 10. What did Jesus say to them? 11. Explain "All power is given unto me," &c. 12. In what name is baptism to be administered? 13. With what precious promise does the chapter close?