
A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE III.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.

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IN the Bible, as it has come down to us and as we understand it, there appear to be many contradictions which may be trusted to smooth themselves out and disappear as our knowledge is corrected and our understanding enlarged. The New Testament is not entirely free from these; nor is the teaching of Jesus when seen by the light of the usual interpretation. But all such seeming contradictions disappear by the light of the history and customs of his day, and by the light of the philosophy that underlies all he says.

The story of the driving of the traders from the temple at Jerusalem, or "the cleansing of the temple," as it is frequently called, is one which presents many difficulties. Perhaps the first to occur is the question of time. When did this happen? John in his story places it in the very earliest part of the ministry of Jesus, on his first recorded visit to Jerusalem after his baptism. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, on the contrary, put it at the very close of his ministry, immediately after his public entry into Jerusalem, and only a few days before his arrest and crucifixion.

This difficulty has been recognized and discussed from very early times, and has been explained in various ways. Some say that John was mistaken; others that the mistake was with Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Still others say there were two events,—one at the first of his ministry, and the other at the last of it. By these varying propositions with their modifications the attempts have been made to overcome the discrepancy. As great an authority as Far-

rar says, that the first cleansing of the temple was so ineffectual that it required another at the close of his ministry.[1] To this the inquiries immediately occur: Was the last one effective? If not, what advantage was there in either, and why should the attempt have been made at all? Puzzling questions arise in connection with every effort to solve these difficulties, and no explanation yet made is without its objections.

But the question concerning the time when the temple was cleansed does not occasion the greatest perplexity in connection with the subject. The story of this incident, more than any other one thing in all the records which we have of Jesus, stands in contradiction to the fundamental principles of his teaching. The many questions suggested by this contradiction often force themselves upon the attention of the earnest investigator, unsettling what would otherwise be unavoidable conclusions. The incident thus assumes greater importance than it would have were it merely a question of dates, and therefore it deserves careful examination.

Throughout all his teaching, except perhaps in this place, Jesus taught distinctly that man was not to be angry, was not to allow the thought or feeling of anger within himself under any circumstances. His teaching goes far beyond even this, and indicates that man is to put anger so completely away from himself that he does not recognize it in another. He is so to purify himself from anger that he does not know what it is when it is before him.[2] Did he who taught such freedom from anger become so angry as to seize the handiest whip from the drivers of the cattle, or more deliberately make one himself, and scourge those men out of the temple?

But it is said, in extenuation of this, that the case was one of righteous indignation. Righteous indignation is the

[1] Life of Christ, chaps. xiii. and xlix. [2] Matt. v. 21–26.

pet phrase of a great many people; but Jesus did not coin it nor indorse it. Although he refers to indignation several times in the course of his teaching, he never speaks of it otherwise than with disapprobation. He condemned it whenever he had occasion to mention it. If this was a case of indignation we cannot call it righteous if we are guided by his teaching on this and kindred subjects.

Another of his precepts, which he insisted on and, without a single exception, followed in all his practice, is, "Judge not." He also said of himself, "I judge no man."[1] Did he judge here? When he saw all this traffic going on in the temple, there must have been judgment and condemnation before there could be the violence of driving them out, for that was the execution of the judgment which had preceded it.

He said, "Resist not evil";[2] and from the beginning to the end of his career he followed that precept to the letter; notably at the end of his earthly ministry, when, if ever, there was a cause for resisting evil. When arrested, examined, and convicted by the Sanhedrim contrary to the form of law, pronounced not guilty by his last judge, Pilate, and yet led off to execution, he made no resistance, although we all remember well his answer to Peter who had struck off the ear of the high priest's servant: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" He might have resisted with overwhelming force and with the foreknowledge of certain success, but he did not.[3]

The sum of all his ethical precepts, a statement which contains within itself the elements of them all, and one which, if complied with, brings obedience to all the others, was thus expressed by him: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."[4] Had he

[1] Matt. vii. 1–5; John viii. 15. [2] Matt. v. 38–42.
[3] Matt. xxvi. 53. [4] Luke vi. 31.

been one of the money-changers there in the temple, would he have wished some one to overturn his table, scattering his money on the floor, and drive him out of the building? Would any one so situated wish for the treatment which he gave them? Mankind is very fond of quoting this precept to others as most wise. Was not this act a distinct violation of it? How can it be justified under these words? On the contrary, this incident is often used to modify the meaning of the golden rule, and to excuse, if not to justify, the violation of its plain requirements. These are very serious contradictions.

Not the least difficulty is found in the fact that such an action would be a violation of his great precept which rests on the principle of love. He said at the outset of his career: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies."[1]

These men were his enemies,—potentially, if not actively. Under his own precept he should love them. This violent attack on them, scourging them with a whip of small cords, forcing them to leave their business suddenly and without preparation, scattering their property and subjecting them to indignity and loss if not to ruin, was not the action of love. If, as the synoptics say, the event occurred just after his public entry into Jerusalem, it was only three or four days later when he said to his disciples: "A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another as I have loved you";[2] and a few minutes later he specified the extent of his love for them when he said: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."[3] Such love as this was certainly not in accordance with the action in the temple. Under compliance with these precepts the incident could not have occurred.

Avoidance of all anger and of every other discordant

[1] Matt. v. 43–48. [2] John xiii. 34. [3] John xv. 9.

thought including indignation and condemnation, non-resistance which does not admit of self-defense, doing to others as one would be done by, such love as loves even enemies and is equal to the love of God for Jesus the Christ—these all lie at the very foundation of his teaching and permeate his whole course. Without these he would lose his most distinctive characteristics. All that he says or does rests on them as a basis; yet in this act of driving out the dealers in the temple each of these was violated. Herein are greater difficulties than any question as to the time when the incident occurred or the frequency of its repetition. His character is at stake. Is his own action consistent with his teaching? Does he shape his own course by the rules which he proposes for others? Or did he on this occasion give way to temptation and violate his own teaching? The author of Hebrews says he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."[1] Is this correct; or did he sin on this occasion? Was he speaking seriously when he said these things which have been referred to? Did he really mean them? These are important questions which occur to every serious person, and they deserve an authoritative and satisfactory answer. Without such an answer the student must be continually in doubt. Contradictions will arise to distract the understanding, veer the judgment from side to side, undermine our opinion regarding his sincerity and authority, vitiate his teaching, and destroy its value for us. As already intimated, an examination of historic facts and conditions will be of advantage in an attempt to find a solution for these questions.

In the first place, the magnitude and importance of this feast of the passover at which it is said the occurrence took place are things we are hardly familiar with and do not estimate at their true value. We do not appreciate the size

[1] Heb. iv. 15.

of the temple and its enclosed courts. It has been sometimes the fashion to belittle its magnitude. The building itself, which included the holy of holies, was not large, and it is to this that writers allude when they speak of the small size of the Jewish temple. But the area included in the courts which surrounded this inner structure was immense; and, unless some particular portion of it was named, it was all this that the Jews meant when they spoke of the temple. Latest investigations lead to estimates which make the temple precincts, roughly speaking, a quadrangle of not less than a thousand feet on a side, with an area of about thirty-five acres.[1] It is estimated that it had a capacity for over two hundred thousand people, or twice as many as the Roman Coliseum. The length of the eastern wall was more than twice that of a side of the great Egyptian pyramid, and its total height on the precipitous side was only a few feet less than that of the same structure.[2]

There is no doubt the number of visitors to the temple at one of the great feasts was vastly in excess of the common impression. Not only did every Jew of Judæa and Galilee feel it incumbent on him to come to the great annual feast, but to bring all his children and dependents. Jews all over the world, and at that time they were very numerous outside of Judæa, also made it a point to come up to the feast as often as possible. And so we are told that, ordinarily, at this period in Jewish history, from two and a half to three million people came to Jerusalem during the great feast, and of course visited the temple.[3] These numbers give the feast an importance which it would not otherwise have; and yet they are exceeded by other estimates

[1] C. R. Conder, in Encyclopædia Biblica, subject "Jerusalem," Vol. ii. c. 2412.

[2] Edinburgh Review.

[3] Edersheim, The Temple and its Ministry; also Farrar, Life of Christ, chap. xlix.

made by men who have examined the situation with skill and ability.

Each visitor was required by custom and religious requirement to bring an offering, for none might appear empty.[1] These offerings were on a scale commensurate with the numbers, as well as the wealth and position, of those making the offerings. Herod at one time, for a certain purpose, sacrificed three hundred oxen at a single feast. Josephus adds that this example was followed by others, so that it was impossible to number the sacrifices.[2] On one occasion the question of the importance of the Jewish people came up, and the officials wished to convey to the Roman emperor an idea of the magnitude of the Jewish feast. For this purpose the high priest kept an accurate account of the lambs sacrificed at that time, and reported two hundred and fifty-six thousand, five hundred.[3] Just for the peace offering, which is only a part of the service, it is said that Solomon on a special occasion offered twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep.[4] This was, as it were, making a huge butcher-shop of the temple. The shambles of Chicago would not exceed such numbers.[5]

The conduct of these sacrifices necessitated an immense

[1] Ex. xxiii. 15. [2] Farrar, Life of Christ.

[3] Edersheim, The Temple and its Ministry. [4] 1 Kings viii. 63.

[5] It is reported, for the year 1900, that 3,061,631 sheep were killed in the Chicago abattoirs, which are claimed to be the largest in the world. Allowing three hundred working-days in the year, this would make an average of 10,205 per day. The feast at which 256,500 lambs were sacrificed extended over only eight days, which would give an average of 32,062 per day, or more than three times the daily average of sheep killed in Chicago. The daily average for the total of cattle, calves, hogs, and sheep killed in Chicago for the year 1900 was only 38,783, or less than one-fifth more than the average of sheep alone in the temple; but it must not be forgotten that large numbers of cattle were also included in the sacrifices. This comparison shows the magnitude of the business which was suddenly terminated by the action of Jesus in driving out the dealers, and it also throws a side-light on the character of the temple service. From one point of view it was for the time an enormous butcher-shop.

business in providing the oxen, sheep, and doves. Two million people required a corresponding supply. To provide two hundred thousand sheep and lambs, or even half that number, and two thousand oxen, is in itself not a small affair. The full extent of the temple business can only be suggested, because specific figures cannot be had. The values involved must have been large. Of course, not all these transactions were in the temple precincts, but probably that was the largest single place for the traffic.

The character of these commercial transactions must have been in some respects, at least, in keeping with that of the ordinary Eastern market, where similar transactions are carried on. Matthew, Mark, and Luke unite in saying that Jesus characterized it as "a den of thieves."[1]

This was literally true. "Corners" in the market are not a modern affair. They had their "corners" then as we have them in these days. A single instance in illustration will be enough to show what must often have occurred. The dove was the poor man's offering. If he could not afford a calf, or a sheep, or an ox, it was allowable for him to offer a dove or a pair of doves. It is a fact stated by the highest authority that on one occasion a man made a corner in doves and ran the price up to what would be equivalent to about three dollars and eighty cents a pair. We can better understand what this means when we remember that the pay for an ordinary day's labor was about twelve and a half cents, and this price would be more than the laborer would receive for a month. But another man "broke the market," and doves were sold the same day for five cents a pair.[2] If such extortion was effected with doves, what was probably done with sheep and oxen?

[1] The Greek word rendered "thieves" in Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicates more than petty stealers, but men of violence banded together. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament.

[2] What these things meant may be better understood by a list of prices of that day: "The cost of common living was very low. In the bazaars

Under their law, every Jew in every part of the world who had arrived at the age of twenty years was expected once a year to pay a half-shekel into the temple treasury as a ransom for his soul; and that payment must be made in the sacred Jewish coinage. No other money could be used, because anything else would have been a desecration.[1] In this country, crossed as it was in various directions by the highways of commercial traffic, and with a population made up of diverse races, there were many kinds of money. The Jewish coinage was not sufficient for the needs of the country, and all kinds were in circulation. From this condition of affairs, as well as because large sums were sent by Jews living elsewhere, the business of the money-changers became a necessity. They furnished the half-shekel for the temple worshipers in exchange for any coinage they might chance to bring. At the middle of the month preceding the great feast, every little hamlet in Judæa and Galilee was visited by these officials, giving the people an opportunity beforehand to change their money into the ancient money of Israel in readiness for the offering at the great feast. At a prescribed time these men returned to Jerusalem, and then the exchange could only be accomplished there.

The value of the annual offering in half-shekels is con-

you might get a complete suit for your slave for $4.50 or $4.75, and a tolerable outfit for yourself for $12.00 to $24.00. For the same sum you might purchase an ass, an ox, or a cow, and for a little more, a horse. A calf might be had for less than $3.75, a goat for $1.25 or $1.50. Sheep were dearer, and fetched from $1.00 to $3.75 or $4.00, while a lamb might be had sometimes as low as five cents. No wonder living and labor were so cheap. Grain of all kinds, fruit, wine, and oil cost very little. Meat was about two cents a pound; a man might get himself a small, of course unfurnished, lodging for about twelve cents a week. A day laborer was paid about fifteen cents a day, though skilled labor would fetch a good deal more. Indeed, the great Hillel was popularly supposed to have supported his family on less than five cents a day."—Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus, Vol. i. p. 116.

[1] Ex. xxx. 12–16.

servatively estimated (of course varied from year to year) at about three hundred thousand dollars. The annual profits to the money-changers from their legal fees were at least forty-five thousand dollars a year. These figures show the magnitude of this part of the business of the money-changers.[1] This was not a small matter in a community where twelve and a half to fifteen cents was the price of an ordinary day's labor. In the proportion which this bears to the price of labor in these days, these profits would have amounted to three hundred and fifty or four hundred thousand dollars, and the gross receipts of the half-shekel tax would reach something like three millions.

The political conditions at this time have an important bearing on our subject. It is well known that the Roman authorities appointed the high priest, because he was not only the head of the church but the political head of the nation as well, and therefore it behooved them that they should have a man in this office who was responsible to them, and wholly within their control. One Annas at last obtained influence with the Romans, and received the appointment. When he could no longer hold the office, he secured the appointment of one relative after another. When he had no more relatives who were eligible, others were appointed at his request who would do his bidding.[2] He was really the one continually in authority, for the priestly officers were only puppets to do his bidding. This explains why Jesus when arrested was first taken before Annas, though Caiaphas was the high priest. Annas succeeded in managing this business for some fifty years, including the time of Jesus. It became an open fact that this office and many others were literally bought and sold. The Jews must have been something more than human had they escaped venality under such conditions and circumstances

[1] Edersheim, Temple and its Service, pp. 48, 49.
[2] Encyclopædia Britannica.

as prevailed at this period in their history. Corruption grew and fattened and was of the boldest kind. It is said of one woman—and the authority is generally accepted as good—that she bought the place of high priest for her lover for one year, paying three bushels of gold pieces for it.[1]

In the earlier days the traffic in the things necessary for the sacrifices was carried on outside the city walls in the vicinity of the gate nearest the temple. Under existing political conditions it is easy to see how the traffic found its way into the sacred city, and finally into the court of the Gentiles, which was the large court of the temple. Those from a distance could not easily drive their cattle and sheep all the way. It was more convenient for the purchasers to find the things they wanted inside the city gates. For the same reasons they brought them up to the entrance of the temple itself. From this it was only a step to the large outer public court. For corrupt officials, excuses for the infringement were plenty. Because the sheep, oxen, and doves were necessary for the temple service, a half-sacred character might be claimed for the traffic. The exchange of the money had a similar plea. This furnished an excuse for allowing it within the temple walls. These temple bazaars were the property and one of the principal sources of income of the family of the unscrupulous Annas, and were popularly known by his name.[2] Finally men rented places for the carrying on of this traffic in this court, just as men rent stalls in the public markets of our cities to-day. A man paid for his place and it belonged to him.

This understanding of the character and magnitude of the business, its legality in form at least, its connection with the highest officials and sources of authority, puts a different appearance upon the ejection if looked at from their point of view. It was a violation of their "vested

[1] Schürer, Jewish People in the Time of Christ.
[2] Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus, Vol. i. p. 372.

rights" as they understood them. The Jew of that day was very much like the Jew of to-day, and in that particular not altogether different from the American or European. He will give up some things, but he does not readily give up his property nor allow interference with his business. This action which we are considering was both, and it was also a disturbance of the peace.

For a better understanding of the biblical narrative and of the subject generally, as well as for convenience of reference, the four accounts from the Gospels are placed below side by side. First are the three parallel narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Each division of each story is made to stand by itself opposite the corresponding divisions of the other stories. Where a writer omits what another speaks about, a blank space is left in his column. Thus the story and all the possible comparisons which may be instituted are at once before the eye.

The account given by John, which represents the incident as occurring at the earlier date, and which really stands by itself distinct from the others, is placed on the same page alongside of the others for easy reference and comparison.

THE SYNOPTIC ACCOUNT.

MATTHEW XXI.	MARK XI.	LUKE XIX.	JOHN'S ACCOUNT. JOHN II.
12 ¶ 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.	15 ¶ And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple.	45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;	13 ¶ And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, 14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

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.

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?

17 ¶ And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

47 And he taught daily in the temple.

But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him.

48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

18 ¶ Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

According to Matthew and Mark the destruction and discomfiture were quite complete. He "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." John is more graphic in his story: "He

drove them [the dealers] all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables." The number of money-changers and traders could not have been inconsiderable, nor was the collection of cattle and sheep small.[1] Imagine for a moment the great commotion that must have taken place,—the consternation of the buyers and sellers who were distinctly concerned, as well as the astonishment of the crowd of onlookers, the confusion caused by the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of cattle and sheep, as they were thus unceremoniously driven out of the temple, the overturning of the tables and other furniture of the place, and the scattering of the coin as it was poured out on the floor. It must have been like "pandemonium turned loose."

What followed all this confusion? The Gospels make it a picture of peace. In the next sentence Matthew says: "The blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them." The contrast, not to say the incongruity, between the scene which this suggests and what had happened only a moment before, is startling. Was there no other immediate consequence? Where were the priests and other temple officials, including their hundreds of assistants and those whose business it must have been to keep order? Where was the Roman garrison, always close at hand in the city, ready to interfere and quell riotous proceedings? Here was this man, single and alone, his habit unresisting; and the blind and the lame came to him at once and he

[1] "There in the actual court of the Gentiles, steaming with heat in the burning April day, and filling the temple with stench and filth, were penned whole flocks of sheep and oxen, while the drovers and pilgrims stood bartering and bargaining around them. There were the men with their great wicker cages filled with doves, and under the shadow of the arcades, formed by the quadruple rows of Corinthian columns, sat the money-changers, with their tables covered with piles of various small coins, while, as they reckoned and wrangled in the most dishonest of trades, their greedy eyes twinkled with the lust of gain."—Farrar, Life of Christ, chap. xiii.

healed them! And children were there, too! A cyclone, followed on the instant by perfect peace, and no indication of any damage done!

The next occurrence is no less remarkable: "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did [the connection indicates clearly that "wonderful things" must refer to the healing of the blind and lame, and not to the interference with the secular affairs of the temple],[1] and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased." There is not one word about the driving out of the money-changers and traders. That incident had sunk out of sight entirely. The cause of their displeasure is that the children are crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David." They question him, "Hearest thou what these say?" There is no word about the immense destruction of property which, as we ordinarily look upon the narrative, must have just occurred, nor any allusion to the disorder and confusion which must have been left behind the sudden exit of the terrorized dealers and their animals. Jesus answered: "Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" The shouting of the children is of such importance that the dispersion of the dealers and brokers is forgotten.

Mark and Luke take up the story here where Matthew lays it down: "He taught daily in the temple"; and "The scribes and chief priests heard, and sought how they might destroy him; for they feared him, because all the people were astonished at his doctrines." To this Luke adds:

[1] Had the phrase, "wonderful things which he did," been an allusion to the discomfiture of the dealers, the arrangement of the sentences in the narrative would have been entirely different. Besides, there would have been some more particular reference to the event itself. On the contrary, the only special reference is to the shouting children! How trivial was this in comparison with the expulsion of the dealers and the attendant confusion!

"And could not find what they might do." Yet here was abundant opportunity for charging him with disturbing the peace; raising a serious commotion, if not a mob; and violating the customs, if not the laws, of the land. They long had wanted some excuse by which they might bring before Pilate a charge against him of violating the civil law. Here was ample cause in the case of the money-changers, if no other. They were duly and legally authorized to transact the business, and had at the very least a semi-official character. He interfered with the transaction of their official business, and also deprived them of their property. John says he poured out their money. How much was this short of stealing? If a man should to-day go into a place of business of another and scatter his money, even if he did not appropriate any of it, such action would warrant immediate legal proceedings. If this occurred at the first of his ministry, as John says, here was ample cause for prosecution. And yet all through his career the political and religious leaders were seeking some excuse by which they might make him amenable to law. If it occurred at the last of his ministry, as the others say, what need for further search after some serious charge against him? Here was the thing they wanted, fresh and ready to their hand. Note also another point. Mark says the priests and scribes "feared him, because the people were astonished[1] at his doctrine [teaching]." Luke says they sought to destroy him, "for all the people were very attentive to hear him." All this together shows that the cause of their animosity was not these overt acts against the dealers (for these are not mentioned), but his teaching or doctrine and the interest of the people in him.

[1] Young says that the Greek word here rendered "astonished" means "to be greatly struck,"—"The people were greatly struck at [or by] his teaching." This agrees with Mark's declaration, that they "were very attentive to hear him."

The account says that for several days following he went out of the city each evening, returning in the morning. Daily he goes into the temple without the slighest concealment, and publicly teaches there. He is met by the chief priests of the temple, and leaders of opinion, and they ask him for his authority, and all kinds of other questions; but they never mention the disturbance in the temple. Nothing was afterward done with him in consequence of this violence. No charge was made against him for it; nor, so far as we have the record, was anything ever said about it. This immense business disturbed, if not broken up; the leaders of the people seeking his destruction, and anxious to find fault with him in any and every possible way; and yet their only complaint on this occasion was because the children cried after him, and because of the things which he taught. Is this silence reasonable?

But this is not all. During a large part of his ministry the Jews were seeking his destruction with increasing intensity of desire. Even after his arrest, evidence against him could not be found.[1] As I have already said, there was enough evidence in connection with this incident, whether it occurred at the earlier or later date—certainly if there were two aggressive acts of this kind. The men driven from the places which they had bought and paid for would surely be willing at any time to testify against him. The money-changers at least could tell of their losses, for it is improbable that they recovered all their coin so ruthlessly scattered. Is it not strange that they did not utilize such unequivocal evidence? Finally, false witnesses were found, who testified that he said he was able to destroy the temple, and build it in three days.[2]

There is a peculiarity about this testimony. John said that Jesus did indeed use similar words,[3] and yet Matthew

[1] Mark xiv. 55. [2] Matt. xxvi. 60-61. [3] John ii. 19.

and Mark[1] say this statement was false. How false? If he used these words, was not the witness true? Turn and read the second chapter of John, verses 18–22 inclusive. He indeed used words similar to those testified to by the witnesses, but with a meaning entirely different from that which they attached to them. They spoke of the temple in Jerusalem, which Herod had not yet completed; he spoke of the temple of himself—the place for worship, "neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem," of which he told the Samaritan women.[2] From one point of view it was not false testimony, but from the true point of view it was. They misrepresented him wholly.

Right here, even at the expense of weariness of repetition, let us recur to the fact that these words thus testified to were uttered on the occasion of the expulsion of the traders. The witnesses to the words were also witnesses to the event. Why was not the event mentioned?

How he was reviled as he hung on the cross! The passers taunted him: "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." The chief priests and scribes jeered him: "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Other things also were "cast in his teeth," but not one word either from these dealers of the temple, or from their friends![3] The crucifixion was on Friday. The dealers were driven out probably on the Monday before.[4] Is it possible that any considerable number of fairly respectable and influential men like those, who, as they must have considered it, had been outraged in person and property, would have been ignorant of his arrest and execution? And if they had known of it, would they not also have been there to witness his discomfiture and join with others in jeers and taunts? They surely had not

[1] Matt. xxvi. 60–61; Mark xiv. 57–58. [2] John iv. 19–24.
[3] Matt. xxvii. 39–44; Mark xv. 29–32.
[4] Robinson, Harmony of the Gospels, page 184.

forgiven him. This action of his touched also those priests who rented them the space in the temple. Would they have refrained from jeers and taunts about that also? Surely, if the incident were worth relating, the taunts would be also. But there is no record of them. It is fair to conclude that there were none relative to this incident.

But I think John gives us the key to the situation. As with the witnesses and the other Jews, the difficulty arises from our misunderstanding of what is meant by "the temple" out of which the dealers were driven. This was not the structure in Jerusalem but the temple of himself.[1]

In Hebrews we read, that "in all points he was tempted like as we are." He entered into the great place of Jewish worship, a place made sacred by their law and custom, and at that time believed by them to be the only place in all the whole earth where God could be worshiped as he ought to be. He saw this place desecrated by commercial transactions, some of them of the worst kind. This naturally suggested to him his own possibilities—what he might do with the sacred power which he wielded. We must remember, whatever the estimate in which we hold him, that he presented the strictly human side also; and as to that side he was a Jew. How could this making wealth out of the necessities of religious observances fail to suggest the wealth which he might obtain by means of the power which he possessed, if he would use it for similar purposes? What would those wealthy people have given for the healing of their loved ones,—as a single instance, the centurion who was so wealthy that he could build a temple for the Jews —what would he not have given, had the payment of money become a question? If, as John narrates, this incident occurred early in his ministry, why may not this temptation have come to him, just as, a little time before, there came to him in the wilderness the temptation to sat-

[1] John ii. 18–22.

isfy his hunger, or to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, or to make himself ruler of the world? If this series of temptations came to him at one time, why not this one a little later? Is it not entirely probable that, suggested by seeing other men making wealth out of the needs of sacred things, there may have come to him the temptation to make gain out of his own sacred power? But he cast the idea out of his mind now just as he had done before. He literally drove the money-changers out of the temple of himself, the traffic thought out of his own mind, as with a whip of small cords. The "temple" was not the gilded temple of Jerusalem, but, as John explains, it was the temple of God, which was within himself.

The accuracy of this interpretation of the story becomes all the more apparent, when we remember that a large number of his ethical precepts rest for their accomplishment upon casting the erroneous or tempting thought out of the mind. That was clearly the method which he followed in the wilderness. In each case there he substituted the thought of truth for the thought of error, thus casting out the erroneous thought. In the same way, in this, he cast out of the temple of himself the temptation to make merchandise by means of the power of God which was in him. The parallelism of the two incidents is complete in both their phases. He did not literally drive the money-changers out of the temple building any more really than he was carried by the devil through the air from the wilderness to the pinnacle of the temple, or to the mountain top; but he drove out of himself the thoughts of covetousness and avarice, as well as the visions of wealth and ease, if not of popularity. It was done immediately, boldly, and thoroughly. With this interpretation all the historical difficulties and moral contradictions disappear.

But one will say at once: Here is a story which has all the forms of history; and do you propose to put it away in

this manner? We have seen the incongruity and contradiction involved in its literalness. The difficulties in this explanation are less. We have a similar instance in the story of the temptation of the wilderness, where there is all the literalness of a narrative of an actual incident if it is, read with that thought. The generally accepted interpretation of to-day is the same in charater as the one here offered for the story of the cleansing of the temple.

One story has the same literalness in form as the other. Here is the crowd of dealers in the temple, and the bare statement that they were driven out. There is a personal devil and his verbal suggestions, Jesus' replies, the transportation from the wilderness to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, and the second flight to the mountain. These were once taken as statements of literal fact, just as this we are considering now is. The child who asked how the devil got Jesus from the wilderness to the pinnacle of the temple, and was told that the devil took him in his arms and flew through the air with him, is not now so very old. The famous French artist Tissot, whose paintings have been admired all over the world, does not hesitate to put this literal interpretation on his canvas. That was the old interpretation, still alive in many minds, and you have it in the story with all the literalness of the other and with far more particularity. There is just as much reason for believing in the literalness of the story of the wilderness as there is for believing that Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple, and yet a large class of very intelligent people have set its literalness aside. If we apply the same rules to both these stories, and accept an interpretation for the cleansing of the temple similar to that which is now accepted for the incident in the wilderness, then all the difficulties and contradictions involved in the story we are considering fall away and are lost. It will then make no difference whether it occurred near the

beginning of his ministry or at its close. It may well have been on both occasions. The most remarkable silence of his enemies is fully accounted for, not only when they were searching for something to use for an accusation against him during the years when he came and went amongst them, and on his trial, but also when they taunted him as he hung on the cross.

Probably no other single thing in all the story of the Gospels has been so often quoted in excuse for violation of the plain meaning of his great social precepts, nor has anything else been used with such persistence and success in perverting them from what would otherwise be their unquestioned interpretation. By this clear explanation and interpretation, this incident, instead of appearing as something at variance from his teaching, becomes a beautiful illustration of it. His fundamental precepts are completely vindicated, and all appearances of contradiction or stultification of himself through violation of his own cardinal rules for conduct wholly disappear. There is no longer any apparent need to modify his precepts or to discard them entirely, in order to accommodate them to his own action on this occasion, and thus save him from the charge of violating them. And the one possible stain on his character is found never to have existed. We now see him who taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors," acting fully up to his own teaching and following his own precepts.

With this interpretation the greatest contradiction in the story of the Gospels disappears from view.