

ally gives a reference to some other book, when the reader might reasonably expect information.

But when all is said, it is clear that this is a most valuable volume, absolutely necessary for the critical student of the Gospels, and, at the same time, containing, in its devout treatment of

critical subjects, many suggestive remarks capable of being made excellent use of by the preacher in his study.¹

¹ We hope that a second edition may be soon called for, and, if so, that the Greek throughout the volume may be carefully revised.

The Homelessness of Christ.

(ST. MATTHEW viii. 19, 20.)

I.

BY THE REV. JOHN ROBSON, D.D., ABERDEEN.

'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.'
—MATT. viii. 20.

I QUITE agree with the opinion of Professor Bruce, commented on in the December EXPOSITORY TIMES, that the current interpretation of this text is unsatisfactory. But I cannot accept the Professor's parabolic interpretation as wholly satisfactory either. Nor can I agree with the editor that the current interpretation is the literal one, or, at all events, the only literal one. It necessitates exaggeration, while there is an interpretation quite in conformity with the ordinary laws of human expression, which requires neither exaggeration nor parable, and conveys a much more pointed lesson than either of the others.

Whoever the scribe was that said, 'Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest,' he gave expression to the sentiment of every true believer in Christ, and to everyone who has this sentiment Christ speaks as He did to the scribe. It was not the poverty of the Son of Man, but the boundless resources at His command, that prevented Him finding where to lay His head. The lesson for every one who will be a true disciple is that the greater his wealth, his resources, his opportunities, the less possible will it be for him to find where to lay his head.

The words are spoken of 'The Son of Man,' and so contain a truth applicable to all men. What is the difference between man and the foxes or birds of the heaven? The latter have no responsibility beyond themselves. Having secured food for themselves and for their young ones, they can retire to rest without feeling responsibility for

others, or fearing that others will come to rouse them with claims that they should discharge it. So it is not with man. He is responsible for his brethren, as far as his power extends. When he has finished his day's work, and got enough for himself and his family, he may retire to rest at home; but he does not thus escape the responsibility resting on him for others; and if he wishes to do so, these others may come rousing him from his rest with claims for help. The man who said, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' was a murderer. It is true that this sentiment of responsibility is very much deadened in man, because man is depraved; but his true nature only requires to assert itself for it to awaken in full force.

Now, Jesus was *the* Son of Man, and this responsibility He felt supremely. He felt the call to help His brethren of mankind with all the resources at His command. There were then only two possible limits to the help He was called to give them—the limit of His own resources or the limit of their claims. The former He knew were boundless. He had resources for curing the ills of life, for healing disease, for feeding the hungry, for helping the poor, absolutely boundless, besides all spiritual riches that were at His command. So that on this side there could be no limit to His work. On the other side, men were beginning to discover His wisdom and His power, to press on Him for teaching, for the healing of disease, for help in all their wants. So that on that side, too, there seemed to be no limit; and the prospect of getting a resting-place seemed hopeless.

This comes out very markedly in the setting in which Matthew has put the saying. Jesus had

given the Sermon on the Mount. As He was coming down, a leper came to Him to be healed, and was healed. When He came into Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, beseeching Him to heal his servant, and got his request granted. Then He went into Peter's house, and there might have found where to lay His head, but Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and He was called to heal her. Thereafter He might have rested, but the house was besieged with the sick and the possessed, and He healed them. And, seeing the multitudes, He gave command to depart to the other side. Then the scribe came offering to follow, and then He uttered the words, 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' Let us try to imagine these words as spoken when He was embarking on board the boat, the eager, exacting multitude crowding the shore, the houses of Capernaum rising up behind, among which were the houses of Peter, and of John, and of other disciples, any of whom would gladly have welcomed Him as a guest, nay, as a master. Can we conceive that either the scribe or any one of the crowd would have understood Jesus to mean that He had no house to which He could go to rest, and not that there was no house where He was safe from being called out of His rest at any moment to give help to the needy?

So it continued to be. Jesus embarked on board the boat, lay down in the stern, and was soon fast asleep. At last He seemed to have found a place where to lay His head. But a storm came on; the boat was covered with the waves, the disciples awoke Him, saying, 'Save, Lord; we perish.' Even there the call of His disciples prevented Him getting rest. Then He came to the other side, where in the desert stillness He might find a place to lay His head, but there met Him two possessed with devils coming out of the tombs, and He had to heal them. Then the inhabitants of the place besought Him to depart, and He returned to Capernaum, and there He was called on to heal the sick of the palsy; and so, once again, got into the unceasing round of teaching and healing. So

it continued, varied by the opposition of some who drove Him away from where He might have got rest, till at last, through the terrible conflicts of Gethsemane and Calvary, He reached the grave, and at last, in that final resting-place of all, He seemed to have found where to lay His head. But the call of a dying world reached Him even there. He rose again the third day, and now, in heaven, every vision of Him shows Him standing, not resting, but continuing still in the attitude of service for His Church on earth.

The nearest illustration we can get of these words is that of a physician in a time of plague. He has been busy all day, and comes home at night to sleep, when he is called out to see one who will die unless he goes to his help. Having attended to him, he comes again to his home to get rest, but he is called out to another, and thence to another, till he says, 'I cannot find a place to rest my head.' He has his home, but he cannot find in it the security from interruption necessary for rest.

This represents truly the facts of Jesus' life, not only at the crisis in which He spake these words, but throughout His whole ministry. And, so understood, they are a lesson to all men. Above all are they a stirring, imperative call to the rich not to be slothful, but to use their resources for the benefit of needy fellow-men. In this there are just the same limitations for us as for Jesus, the limit of our powers, and the limit of the claims on us. Some time ago a wealthy philanthropist in London gave a large sum of money to the poor. Shortly after, an advertisement appeared in the papers requesting that no more letters be sent to him, as he was not able even to read one-tenth of the applications for help that had been pouring in on him. There was a limit to his powers, and there is a limit to the powers of all men. Up to that limit, and not beyond it, are we called on as sons of men to serve, and if we would be true followers of the Son of Man, who had not where to lay His head, we shall not allow considerations of sloth or ease to hinder our service.

II.

BY THE REV. JOHN REID, M.A., DUNDEE.

THERE is evidently room for a fresh study of the incident in which our Lord met the offer of the scribe with the words, 'The foxes have holes and

the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' Like Dr. Bruce, in his latest book, *With Open Face*, I have long

felt that the common and traditional interpretation was unsatisfactory and objectionable. His interpretation, however, seems to me even more unsatisfactory and objectionable. For one thing, it is an instance of the parabolical interpretation of historical incidents, which is the last resort of the despairing homilist. Those who possess an exegetical conscience avoid it like sin. It is only admissible for purposes of edification, when the literal or historical interpretation is destitute of practical or spiritual significance. To give colour to the assertion that the words of Jesus mean that He was 'spiritually an alien, without a home in the religion of the time,' Dr. Bruce puts the incident comparatively late in the life of Jesus. He, however, lays stress on the record of Matthew as giving the important information that the volunteer was a scribe. Why should he not also lay stress on the indication of time, which the place of the incident in Matthew's Gospel gives to us? Meyer accepts the record of Matthew as indicating the true historical position of the incident. And if we conclude that the early date is the right date, it at once follows that the enumeration of the mass of incidents, which had intensified the opposition between Jesus and the scribes, is altogether beside the mark. It is much more probable that a scribe should wish to be received into the Jesus-circle, before the gulf of opposition became wide and fixed, than afterwards. Then, at the early stage of the life of Jesus, it was not apparent that He was spiritually an alien. He still attended the synagogue services; and it is only at the close of His life that He prophesies to His disciples that they would be put out of the synagogue. Taking these things into consideration, it does not appear that the words of Jesus would suggest the meaning which Dr. Bruce finds in them.

It seems to me that the repelling reply of Jesus is best regarded literally, as a statement of physical hardships to be endured by Him and His companion disciples. Undoubtedly there were among His followers a number of men who were able to minister to Him of their substance, but their ability or willingness did not meet the facts of the case. As Meyer says, 'The words are an evidence of poverty, but of poverty connected with an unsettled life, not necessarily to be identified with want.' The itineracy of Jesus throughout Galilee and Judea involved an almost continual uncertainty of shelter. We know that in one case at

least hospitality was refused, and that may have occurred more than once. Even though the country was thickly populated, it might easily happen that the necessities of the itineracy, and the comparative largeness of the company, would compel Him and His followers to spend the night in the open air. These possibilities are all that are involved in the graphic words of Jesus, in refusing the offer of the scribe. They are only indicative of hardships. There is no need to attribute to them a 'certain tone of exaggerated sentiment, according ill with the known character of Jesus.' And this statement of hardships to be endured by Him and His disciples corresponds with the whole impression of the gospel records. Dr. Bruce's spiritual interpretation seems very far fetched indeed.

The suggestion that the scribe was possessed of means is also quite needless, and is besides unlikely. Scribes were to be found in all grades of social life, like ministers and teachers of to-day. Undoubtedly they were held in honour among the people, but that honour did not always mean wealth. From the large number of scribes which existed in Palestine, it is almost certain that the majority of them were comparatively poor. Seeing also how few rich men were attracted to Jesus while He was on the earth, it is somewhat unlikely that the scribe had any claims to be ranked among them. With even greater likelihood we may regard him as a poor but godly scribe, of the spirit of Hillel, whom the life and words of Jesus had attracted. If among the Pharisees there were a few spiritually-minded men, may we not say that even the bigoted order of scribes was saved from universal corruptness, by a few lowly and truly religious men.

But suppose this scribe to be one of these, how do the words of Jesus apply specially to him? The common idea that he had 'earthly aims which the eye of Jesus had fully penetrated' (Meyer) proves too much. Had the other disciples, who were called to be the personal followers of Jesus, no 'earthly aims'? Were they free from self-seeking, or from hopes of personal advancement, in connexion with the Kingdom of God? Did not James and John, after they had been in the company of Jesus for a lengthened period, come to Him with the request for the chief places beside Him in His Kingdom? Nay, even at the end, when the Master was going up to Jerusalem

to be crucified, were not the disciples disputing on the way as to 'who should be the greatest?' Selfish hopes, 'earthly aims,' would have shut out not only this scribe, but every one of the twelve as well. It is quite evident that this reason does not specially apply to the scribe.

The other current reasons for his exclusion or rejection are equally beside the mark, and equally uncharitable and unsatisfactory: as, that he was a rash, impulsive, hasty man, who had not counted the cost of what he proposed to do; or that his 'homage breathed a blind confidence in his own strength' (Godet). Would not Peter at least—if not James and John, the Boanerges—have been also rejected, had their qualities of nature unfitted them to be the companions and servants of Jesus? Were the impulsive, the generous-hearted, or even the self-confident men who wished to serve Christ always to be refused? Was there no hope of a place for them in the higher service of Jesus until they had purged themselves of their faults? Did not the Master call all His disciples with all their faults and failings, and fit them for His service *in His service*? This reason also must be laid aside. It does not specially apply to the scribe.

How then are we to interpret the saying, so as to give it a real personal application to him?

(1) First of all, it is plain that when the scribe volunteered to follow Jesus 'whithersoever He went,' he was already a disciple. This is evident from the words in the next verse (Matt. viii. 21)—'another of his disciples.' It is not a proposal on the part of the scribe to identify himself with Jesus. He had done so already. Both he, and the other in verse 21, belonged at this time to the number of disciples, using the word in its more general sense (Meyer). The scribe wished to be something more, viz. to be one of the little band of chosen personal companions who were to be with Jesus in His public ministry.

(2) Accepting, with Meyer, the record of Matthew as giving the true historical position of the incident, it becomes evident that the offer of the scribe was made very shortly after the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount, or, as Dr. Bruce would have it, the Teaching on the Hill. Whether the Sermon is a record of the teaching of a week or a day, is immaterial. But, prior to the Sermon, Jesus had chosen from the general company of disciples, the twelve men who were to be His

companions in His itinerant ministry. Surely it is not a far-fetched idea to suppose that the scribe had been present when the selection of the twelve was made, and that he had been greatly disappointed in being passed by? He may have been as warmly attached to the Master as any of the favoured few who were chosen. He may have cherished secret longings for opportunities of showing the strength and fulness of his devotion; and the loss of the opportunity given to others filled his heart with sadness. Can we not think of him lingering on the outskirts of the little company of Jesus and the twelve, as they descended the hill towards the sea: lingering still, while they remained in the city by the sea, until Jesus gave commandment to His disciples to depart to the other side. This was the hour of separation. He felt that he could not bear to be left behind. As he saw Jesus about to take ship, his feelings of regret and desire overcame his shyness. He would make one effort at least to secure a place beside Him. So, at the last moment, he came to Jesus with the cry of his heart upon his lips—'Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.' But Jesus replied, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' Other words may have been added; but in the abbreviated record of the gospel history, this essential and easily remembered statement was alone recorded. I cannot believe that the words of rejection were spoken with harshness or severity. To say the least of it, Jesus had too much human courtesy to repulse with harshness any generous impulse of devotion towards Himself. Volunteers of this description were remarkably rare in His experience; too rare to be met with severity when they came. Surely rather, as He looked on the scribe, He loved him; loved him, but refused him. And why? What was there in the scribe to which His words applied?

(3) The words on the very face of them refer to *physical* hardships. The uncertainty of shelter which He had to expect in His itineracy, entailed the necessity of ability to endure physical sufferings. Is not this the clue which we must follow? Must we not look for some *physical* disability on the part of this volunteer, to whom this objection, and no other, was made? He was a scribe. I take the word as referring not only to a class, but to an occupation. Most likely he had all the

physical characteristics of his profession. He was unaccustomed to hardship; was unfitted for a life involving exposure more or less severe. *The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.* This at least is a reason which might specially apply to him. And apart altogether from the suggestion of physical disability which the character of his occupation provides, is it at all unlikely that men of weakly constitution were attracted to Jesus, and wished to serve Him? Even if the conditions of scribe-life in Palestine were more favourable to health than the conditions of a similar occupation among us, may not this scribe have had a weakly constitution, and bore the sign of it on his face and person? May not this man be the type in the Gospel story of the many men and women who have to bear the cross of physical weakness, and its consequent limitations, whose spirit would send them out to the high places of the field in the devoted service of their Saviour? Would it not be remarkable, especially in view of His kindness to all who were sick and diseased, if no instance of this kind happened in the earthly life of Jesus, since it happens so often now? Has not every missionary society had experience of the sadness and pain of saying, gently but resolutely, that while the spiritual qualifications are all that can be desired, in some volunteer for the foreign field, the physical constitution is unfit for the strain? Was it Richter who said, 'In this world we must not only have wings for the empyrean, but also a stout pair of boots for the paving-stones'?

That this physical disability was the barrier, becomes even more likely when we notice how many hardy fishermen were called into the band of personal attendants in the itineracy; men who were tanned by the sun and the sea, inured to hardships, and accustomed to exposure. The fact

that tradition assigns a long and vigorous life to almost all the apostles, even in the severe and dangerous experiences which their work entailed, is an indication that they must have had thoroughly good constitutions to start with. Like the angels, these messengers of the cross had to 'excel in strength.' This, along with the spiritual qualities of their nature, may have been a reason why they were chosen. I think, therefore, that it was for this cause that the eager scribe disciple was kept back, and that the sentence was pronounced in the most tender tones of love and sorrow and sympathy. Certainly it provides a physical disability, which agrees with the demand for power to face the physical hardship which the words of Jesus imply.

(4) Then, had Jesus spoken harshly to the scribe, is it at all likely that the other two disciples, who hesitated at the last moment to follow Him into the boat,—is it at all likely that they would have asked for liberty to delay? Severity shown to the scribe would have made them still more unwilling to speak of their own perplexities. But when they saw the gentle considerateness of their Master for the physical hindrance of their fellow disciple, they were encouraged to speak of the hindrances which seemed of much greater importance to them—the claims of filial duty and family affection. In the reply which was given to them, they were taught that the preaching of the Gospel is for them the supreme duty. And after all, is not this the reason why even the scribe was not accepted? The Lord Jesus must not have in the little band any one who might not endure the physical strain of the itinerant ministry. The weakly will always have opportunity and scope for serving Him, but it is the strong who must take the field.

III.

By MISS AGNES MARWICK, EDINBURGH.

'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.'—ST. LUKE ix. 58.

I have heard the following explanation of the above text given by a native of Palestine, and should be glad to know how far it may be relied upon:—

In a Jewish house there was usually a common sleeping-room for all the family. The parents

slept on a couch in the centre, the sons occupied one side, and the daughters the other (cf. 'My children are with me in bed,' St. Luke xi. 7).

When a son married, he had a separate sleeping apartment assigned to him, and the name by which it was called signifies 'a place to lay one's head.'

Christ's reply to the scribe would therefore

mean that He must lead a solitary life, and would never be a married man, which to His countrymen would seem a much harder lot than a life of mere poverty. Moreover, if our Lord's

mother possessed property in Nazareth (cf. 'her own house,' St. Luke i. 56) and also in Judea, He could scarcely have been so poor as the ordinary interpretation of the passage would imply.

Sermonettes for Children on the Golden Texts.

I.

'The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.'—I SAM. xvi. 7.

ONE of our poets has said that the proper study of mankind is man. Whether that is true or not, mankind takes a great interest in man. Portraits are preferred by most to landscapes; and the immense number of novels that pour out from the press every year depend upon their human interest—they are read eagerly because they tell us about *persons*. Again, much of our ordinary conversation is about people—what they have been doing or saying, or what they are. Thus we are perpetually forming judgments, saying this one is nice, that one nasty; this one foolish, that one clever. And these judgments are often very hasty and superficial.

1. For Man looketh on the outward appearance. The Israelites chose Saul to be their king because he was a head and shoulders taller than all the people. A Greek historian says that the Ethiopians used to choose their kings in the same way, conferring the sovereignty on the man of largest stature and greatest strength; and Herodotus himself admires Xerxes because, of the five millions of men who formed his army, he was the tallest and most beautiful.

Now, there are some things for which stature is necessary. The giraffe could not reach the high branches to feed on the leaves if it had not a long neck. And there are things for which strength is a recommendation, though they are getting fewer every day. But the tallest and strongest may be a very poor *man*. When Jesse's eldest son passed before Samuel he would have anointed him king, he was so tall and strong; but God said 'No,' and the stripling David was sent for, as he fed his few sheep in the wilderness, and anointed king.

The particular matter in which the judgment of men was at fault in our Lesson was in the power to give. Ananias and Sapphira gave, so did Barnabas. Most men would have judged of their liberality by the exact amount of their giving. But Christ, who saw into the heart of the widow who gave the two mites, and said that she gave more than all the rest, now enabled St. Peter to see into the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira, and say that their giving was simply stealing. For their heart was not right; they gave both grudgingly and hypocritically.

2. For God looks on the heart. One of our writers says that the mind is the measure of the man. But if the mind means mental ability, it is a mistake. Mental ability, like stature and strength, is good if it is directed aright. And it is the heart that directs. The heart or will—there the *motive* resides. It is not what we have nor give, but what we are, that makes us men, and it is the heart that tells what we are. We sometimes say that a bad man has a good heart, but then we are misusing the word, making it signify the impulses or emotions instead of the will.

So, then, if you would find out what a boy or man is, find out his heart. He may sometimes do wrong, and go wrong; but if his heart is right he will come right in the end and do right. David did wrong, and once went very wrong; but his heart was right in God's sight and he repented of the wrong, and so was actually a man after God's own heart.

Now one or two points to remember:—

(1) God looks on us. We are never out of His sight. He saw David in the wilderness among the sheep, though his very family had practically forgotten him. There is no act we engage in but it is naked and open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do.

(2) God looks into us. It is easy to deceive others, even those who know us best: it is im-