

“faith” and “hope.” (5) The “grace” and the “glory of God,” received and appropriated in Christian faith and hope, attain their highest expression in the redemptive self-sacrifice of the God-man. (6) By way of closing the circle of the thought, it is expressly stated that the end of the redemptive work is the creation of “a holy people,” who are not only his “peculiar treasure” and inheritance, but who have, as the law and charter of their incorporation, this grand distinction, that they are charged with the genius of goodness—the passion for godliness. They are the very “zealots” of goodness, passionately eager for all that will help and move them to realize the ideal of the Divine life.

If this be the outline of the colossal thought of this great utterance, we see the full meaning of the *γὰρ* (for) in Verse 11.

H. R. REYNOLDS.

CHRIST FEEDING THE MULTITUDES.

OUR Gospels contain accounts of the miraculous feeding of large multitudes by Christ on two different occasions. On the first, five thousand were fed, and the narrative of this miracle is recorded by all four Evangelists.¹ On the second, the numbers were four thousand, and this miracle is mentioned only by St. Matthew and St. Mark.² In the accounts of these two miracles there are, as might be expected, many points of great similarity, while there are some features of very marked difference. Opposite schools of critics have dealt with these narratives in diverse ways. Those

¹ Matt. xiv ; Mark vi. ; Luke ix. ; John vi.

² Matt. xv. ; Mark viii.

who are disposed to treat the gospel history as a series of compositions on which they may put the freest construction, and for the form of which they think themselves at liberty to account in such wise as may seem most in accord with the ordinary course of human events, have dwelt to the full on every point of resemblance which is to be found in the two narrations, and have striven to shew that out of one occurrence, whether miraculous or not, two stories have in process of time been elaborated, whereas there was but one occasion on which Jesus wrought the work which has been put on record in a double form. Others, desirous to accept the Gospels in their integrity, and being of a more conservative, and therefore perhaps, at the present day, less popular school of criticism, have laid much stress on the points of difference between the narratives, and have thus, in some degree, left out of sight the equally prominent, if not more prominent, features of resemblance.

It would seem the right course, if we are to draw from the Gospels their true sense, to keep firm hold both of the points of likeness and unlikeness in these histories, for both appear to have their proper importance.

All four narratives of the first of these miracles agree that it was wrought for the sustenance of a multitude composed mainly of our Lord's own countrymen. Jesus had been teaching in the cities of Galilee,¹ and healing them that were diseased. At the close of his labours of love He went away to the other side of the lake, that He and his disciples might enjoy a brief repose. But the people from the western side, when

¹ John vi.

they knew of his departure, followed after Him,¹ and when they were come, He continued his teaching to them; foregoing, as He so often did, his own desire for rest. It was after this crowd had been some time with Him that the occasion for feeding them arose. The day had begun to wear away; they were faint with hunger, and they had no meat. Now it was when this first miracle of feeding so large a multitude was ended, that a feeling manifested itself among them which demonstrates most clearly their nationality—which shews us that they must have been Jews. We are told “Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force and make him a king,”² and for this reason He removed Himself out of their way. Their thoughts were arrested by the mighty work which they had just beheld; and, with the national readiness to run after any new hero in whom they saw a possible deliverer from the yoke of Rome, they at once interpreted what they had seen into an evidence that here at last was One who might restore their people and nation to its ancient glory. With this view, they were ready to put Jesus forward as their Champion, and to give Him the title of King, if He would have it. But in Christ they had no Judas or Theudas,³ boasting himself to be some one, that he might draw much people after him. “He departed again into a mountain himself alone.”⁴

The second miracle was wrought among a very different people, and with a widely different result. Jesus had been in the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon,⁵ and had made a circuit through the northern regions of the Holy Land. Having crossed the Jordan in the

¹ Luke ix. ² John vi. 15. ³ Acts v. ⁴ John vi. 15. ⁵ Mark vii. 24.

upper part of its course, He had come into the hill country near Decapolis,¹ and was approaching the Sea of Galilee from the east. Here He was thronged by a crowd who were not Jews; but even among the heathen "he could not be hid." His fame had gone abroad, and the inhabitants, with all that roughness which characterizes a mountaineer population, brought their sick, and *cast them down* at the feet of the Healer.² The numbers of the crowd increased by reason of the cures which were wrought; and, tarrying with Jesus a long while, these men, too, needed some sustenance. The very mention of the time which they had been about Christ—"three days"³—is a mark of the hardy character of these dwellers in the hills. But amid the history of the miracles which Jesus wrought on this occasion we have an indication that the people were a multitude of a very different character from the former. These men were filled with no aspirations for the re-establishment of the kingdom of the Jews; they were not worshippers of the same God. We read that they "glorified the *God of Israel*"⁴ at the sight of the works of Jesus. But He was not their God, nor are we told of any desire on their part to become the servants of this God of Israel. But they knew their Healer was an Israelite, and they felt somewhat like Nebuchadnezzar at the rescue of the Hebrew heroes from the fire—"that there was no other God which could deliver after this sort."

In view of the differing circumstances under which these two miracles were wrought, and the different character of the recipients of Christ's mercy, there cannot, I think, be too much emphasis laid on those points

¹ Mark vii. 31.

² Matt. xv. 30.

³ Mark viii. 2.

⁴ Matt. xv. 31.

of resemblance which the one miracle has to the other. Dwell as much as you can on the common features of the food, and of the dialogue which preceded each miracle, and you will reach one true view of these histories. For here, as so often is the case in the life of Jesus, we have a token, slight when first observed, but yet full enough when it is pondered on, that the mission of the Lord was for Jew and Gentile alike, and that He was to be the bread of life to both. The Jew had the precedence in order of time, for he was of the seed to whom the promise had at first been made; and he had enjoyed larger opportunities of knowing God, so that among his race most surely it might be hoped that the foundations of the kingdom of Christ could be laid. But to the Gentile within a very short time there was to be offered equal admission to the privileges of the same gospel. And this revelation of the kingdom of God seems to be set before us most strongly when we emphasize as much as possible the common features in these narratives—those which tell us how Christ shewed himself to his own first, but then also to the heathen, as the true bread which came down from heaven, and was meant to give life to every man. We cannot fail to see a reason here why these histories have so much in common. They tell of a common salvation to be offered through Christ to Jew and Gentile alike.

But the different characters of the populations, and the different effects produced on the two crowds, shew most emphatically that the stories relate to different actions. There is besides another small and undesigned mark of distinction which is worth notice in these stories, and which exactly suits with what has been already

said about the two populations among whom Christ gave these manifestations of his power. In the first narrative the baskets are distinguished by all the Evangelists under the name *κοφίνοι*. We know from other sources that this word is applied to baskets of a kind which could easily be carried on the arm, and which were suitable for the conveyance of small articles, such as are constantly borne about by every hand in places where the population is numerous, and where journeys to and fro are not matters of much consideration. One Roman writer¹ has especially marked this kind of basket (*cophinus*) as in use among the Jews, and has pictured it to us as the sort of vessel in which eggs and similar little things could be carried from place to place. Such then are the baskets specified by all the Evangelists in the first miracle as those into which the fragments were gathered after the miraculous meal. The word bears with it the impress of truth and personal observation. The multitude for whom the miracle was wrought were Jews, who had run together, basket in hand, from all the villages which lay round the Sea of Galilee. The *cophinus* was exactly the article which such a crowd so collected would be sure to have with them.

But when we come to the other miracle, although in our translation the same word (basket) is employed for the vessels into which the fragments were gathered, yet in the Greek it is an utterly different one. In the second story the word is *σπυρίς*, and it is a pity we cannot employ to translate it some word like the old English *frail*, still in use for wrappers of dried fruits, and in some parts of the country for the bag in which

¹ "Judæi, quorum cophinus fœnumque supellex."—Juvenal, *Sat.* iii. 14.

a carpenter carries his tools about. This seems to be exactly what is meant. It was such a basket as, being formed of soft material, could readily be made to accommodate articles of any shape, and it was also at times of a large size. In a basket of this kind (*spuris*) it was that St. Paul was packed up,¹ when he was lowered over the wall of Damascus to escape the way-laying of the Jews. Such a wrapper is exactly the basket we should expect to find among a mountainous people, where journeys from the valley to the heights were attended with some difficulty, and by whom every sort of article must needs be made into a great package, and borne on the backs of men, exactly as is now done in some parts of Switzerland and North Italy. When this *spuris* came to be adopted for use in towns, and for carrying smaller objects, its name appears in the form of a diminutive, *sportula*. The Romans adopted it, just as they adopted our own *basket*,² with its Keltic name (*basgawd*), and few words are more common than *sportula* in the silver age of Roman speech.

This natural touch of distinction in the two stories is exactly what we should expect from a consideration of the different localities in which each miracle was wrought; and, being preserved in all the narratives of the miracles, is one of the most convincing proofs that these records are pictures in the words of eyewitnesses of two different events.

While, then, we welcome all the points of likeness which can be found in the stories as tokens of the purpose of God from of old that salvation, though offered

¹ Acts ix. 25.

² "Barbara de pictis veni *bascauda* Britannis,
Sed me jam mavult dicere Roma suam."—Martial, *Epigr.* xiv. 99.

by Christ to the Jews first, should soon be as fully offered to the Gentile world, we feel no need to yield to the criticism of those who, by reason of this similarity—for which we as being Gentiles are heartily thankful—would ask us to detract from our estimate of the credibility of the Gospel narratives, because there are in them, beside the points of likeness, strong points of difference. For these, if rightly weighed, seem to give the most powerful, because unintentional, testimony to the truth of all that the Evangelists have told us concerning these miracles.

J. RAWSON LUMBY.

BRIEF NOTICES OF BOOKS.

THE SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY. NEW TESTAMENT. Vol. I. (London: John Murray.) This volume includes the Synoptical Gospels, of which the first was assigned to the late Dean Mansel. His commentary on St. Matthew, which extends to Chapter xxvi., can hardly fail to disappoint those who hoped much from the application of a mind so penetrating and original to the exposition of Holy Writ. There is little in it which might not have been written by a clergyman of the most ordinary type, provided that he had some touch of scholarship, and had taken the pains to read the commentaries most acceptable in orthodox circles. To a man of the Dean's remarkable gifts and culture it must have been the slightest and most perfunctory work. It reads as if he had simply jotted down what first occurred to him as he glanced through the Gospel.

But Canon Cook's work on St. Mark and St. Luke is, as all his work is apt to be, good and honest work: not quite so good, I think, as it is in his Commentary on Job; but that may be in part because that subject was chosen by himself,